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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7760th meeting
Thursday, 25 August 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ibrahim	(Malaysia)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulwafa
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mrs. Nuñez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2016/666)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2016/666)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Tanin, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Pristina.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/666, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: I am pleased to update the Security Council on recent key developments in Kosovo since the Secretary-General's previous report (S/2016/407) and offer some observations.

The situation in Kosovo over the past three months has been more stable than it had been during preceding reporting period. Nonetheless, security threats and political tensions remained beneath the surface. Following a period of relative calm, after months of unruly stand-offs in the Kosovo Assembly, a single issue gave way to new controversy: the ratification of the agreement on Kosovo's territorial delineation with the Republic of Montenegro. Political arguments and accusations followed, often straying far from the underlying facts. That irritated public sentiment, obstructed the functioning of the Assembly and delayed work on more pressing issues. Although the agreement had been arrived at with informed international support, the consideration of its ratification by the Assembly was postponed. No doubt, consensus-building efforts ought to have been made much earlier, well before the issue became a lightning rod for rancour and partisan debate. Regardless, new efforts have been undertaken by political leaders in order to ensure all additional questions are answered.

Meanwhile, the opposition parties continue working from the wings to try to generate, exploit and, if possible, prolong such moment in the supposed crisis. Whatever success they may ultimately achieve in strengthening an alternate pole of influence, the opposition appears to be more aware that the use of violence is counterproductive to that objective. In addition, acts of political violence, including three incidents involving explosives in August that targeted the Assembly, the home of a Kosovo official and the headquarters of a public broadcaster, are absolutely unacceptable. That is a problem that should continue to be managed responsibly by the authorities. From my recent talks with top leaders in Kosovo, I have the impression that they understand the need to place realism and practicality higher on their political agenda. Many have their eyes upon emerging wider trends, and the opportunity those trends offer to seize levers of opportunity and remove old obstacles in order to achieve faster progress.

I have gained the same impression about local leadership during my visits to municipalities and communities throughout Kosovo. In Gjakovë/Đakovica, the Mayor indicated that authority came with responsibility, not just privilege. In North Mitrovica, the main concerns were access to employment, reliable public services, and confidence in governing institutions. In Obilić/Kastriot, the impact of nearby outdated energy facilities, over which the municipality has had little or no say, endangers public health and safety and reduces social cohesion and local economic growth. In Vushtrri/Vučitrn, I learned that the different communities are able to work together towards a common future, and that inclusive governance is one

of the key elements needed for that work. I heard the desire for improved relations and more confidence among the ethnic communities. Behind all of that, it is apparent that economic, educational and health-care issues, as well as the rule of law and combating corruption, are the dominant concerns of people at the local level, not inter-ethnic politics. Recently, a young man in the Prizren region approached me to say that corruption was the biggest problem for his generation and for all people in Kosovo, a message I have heard on many occasions.

Throughout all of the former Yugoslavia, the immediate post-conflict generation has now reached voting age, and many are now graduating from tertiary education. Many young adults have known little of public life besides divisive post-conflict rhetoric. If stability and prosperity are to be achieved, the post-conflict generation is in need of clearer direction and better opportunities as inhabitants of modern Europe and as world citizens. A lack of promising trades and professions, public corruption and extremes of economic inequality all fracture the communities far more than ethnic or religious nationalism. Therefore, an impetus for reconciliation emerges from below, but in my view it needs to be strengthened from above as well by leaders. I already hear that clearly from some leaders. But I have also heard it from other segments of society as well, where individuals recognize the centrality of putting the past behind if there is to be meaningful movement forward.

Having returned from Belgrade just yesterday, I was also struck during my conversations with top leaders by the emphasis given to regional cooperation and better understanding of the positions of other sides when working to overcome the obstacles to trust and progress. As in the case of Pristina, they also specifically stressed the need for the European Union-led dialogue to be successful. Prime Minister Vučić in particular stressed to me that too much time was being lost and that what was needed was more serious and much more sustained commitment and work on dialogue — not only from leaders and negotiators but from the European Union and from all of us in the international community as well.

The European Union-led high level dialogue remains a cornerstone in the road towards reconciliation. It is the European Union perspective in the region that continues to be a main driver of reform, particularly in the vital areas of governance, the rule of law and human rights. Progress continued to be made in some areas during the reporting period, including the start of the refurbishment of the Mitrovica Main Bridge, as well as the narrowing of differences on the telecommunications issue. With regard to other agreements, in particular the agreement on the association/community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo, more focused work is clearly necessary. It is natural for delays in implementation to lead to second-guessing of the process itself by observers and participants alike. Leadership from both sides is at least as important as pragmatism and commitment, in order not only to reinvigorate but possibly also to deepen the process going forward.

Few of those displaced by the conflict have returned to their homes, and of those who returned, many have not stayed. Approximately 16,000 persons remain displaced within Kosovo, with many more outside. With the passage of time, many have by now built new lives in their places of displacement. Yet the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons is a fundamental right, and that issue should, I believe, be brought back into focus by all, including by the international community.

In order to achieve returns, constructive engagement is needed with returnees and receiving communities, which must be matched by political commitment, but, even more important, by the commitment of resources. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, some 9,400 displaced persons are now registered to return. For that to take place, clear and realistic commitments need to be present, together with the allocation of the requisite resources and efforts in order to ensure that the proper conditions are in place.

Kosovo possesses a rich and diverse cultural heritage that includes religious, linguistic, artistic and social diversity. The Kosovo system has comprehensive legislation protecting the freedoms of language use, association and worship. It is the full implementation and enforcement of those strong legislative frameworks that remains an essential objective.

Over the past three months, there have been no large-scale inter-ethnic disturbances, nor any significant attacks against cultural sites. However, vulnerable groups, in particular among non-majority communities, have been subject to higher rates of intimidation. Statistics in that area must always be

treated with enormous caution, but those available at the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) suggest that there are, on average, around 25 potentially ethnically motivated crimes recorded in Kosovo every month. All communities are affected, and the primary motives behind the crimes are frequently found not to have been political. But it bears emphasizing that the victims of intimidation always have a different perspective from those who have not experienced it. More sensitivity to that essential truth is needed by the authorities on all sides, as well as on our part.

With respect to reconciliation, I wish to commend the courageous initiatives taken by President Thaçi. On 21 July, he visited and paid respects at a memorial commemorating 14 Kosovo Serb civilians from Staro Gradsko who had been murdered in that village shortly after the end of hostilities. A few days later, he visited another memorial to an unsolved crime against Kosovo Serbs in the village of Goraždevac where, in 2003, teenagers swimming in a river were murdered. Those visits remind us also of the fact that all leaders share a solemn responsibility to do more to help resolve the missing persons cases, which date back from the time of the conflict.

Seventeen years after the end of the conflict, the fate of over 1,600 persons remains undetermined. All communities are affected by the loss. The issue of the missing should not be allowed to slip from the political agenda, but the missing will be found, and their fates determined, only if there is fundamental and sustained commitment by all, including our Mission.

The phenomenon of violent extremism is a swiftly evolving global challenge. The presence of radical Islamist elements and organizers in Kosovo is known. Local authorities have taken numerous strong measures to mitigate the threat, but the presence of elements that have participated in recent foreign wars gives us all reasons to be vigilant and aware. The Kosovo authorities have implemented a strong law enforcement approach with respect to those who advocate violence and those who facilitate volunteer fighters. As the authorities have acknowledged, that can work only when it goes hand in hand with a development approach that effectively targets the specific socioeconomic drivers of extremism in Kosovo. There is also an important role to be played by the international community through well-coordinated assistance, including from the United Nations.

In recent days, we have been able to significantly strengthen constructive engagement with Kosovo leaders, which was reflected, among other things, in substantive meetings with President Thaçi, Prime Minister Mustafa and Foreign Minister Hoxhaj. My constructive engagement with Belgrade leaders, including my discussions this week with President Nikolić, Prime Minister Vučić and Foreign Minister Dačić, remain essential for maintaining our balanced and objective role within the framework of regional interaction and towards the full realization of our mandate.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight that, during the past few months, we have thoroughly reviewed the activities of the Mission and developed a focused vision not only for recalibrating and optimizing our work, but also for creating an atmosphere with all stakeholders that allows the Mission to engage more efficiently and effectively on both existing issues and emerging issues, such as the global problem of violent extremism and the development of workable frameworks for reconciliation. In short, we will be implementing the objectives that the Security Council has entrusted to us in a more up-to-date manner.

I thank the Council for its continuing support for UNMIK.

The President: I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for presenting the report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General and to congratulate the President of the Security Council for his successful stewardship of the affairs of the Council during the month of August. I also extend my greetings to all the members of the Security Council.

The members of the Security Council deal with issues that pose security threats as they strive to fulfil the principal task entrusted to them by the Charter of the United Nations, namely, safeguarding of international peace. In doing so, they often encounter problems whose causes date back decades, even centuries. Presumably, members of the Council are not familiar, nor can they be, with all of the details, especially the minute ones, and all the facts relating to each and every problem that they are called upon to resolve. That puts

an even greater obligation on those who come before the Council to present only true facts — facts that they have checked. Serbia's representatives have always made every effort to address the Council in a constructive manner, as they wish to contribute to the process of reconciliation and to the stability of the region, as well as to the dialogue conducted in Brussels. Priština's representatives, however, continue to overload the Council with falsehoods and lies, and lately they have even engaged in outright propaganda.

At the previous meeting (see S/PV.7693) of the Security Council on the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, on 16 May, in addition to other fabrications, we heard that Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija were denied the right to play and that Albanian youngsters had been beaten and arrested by the Serbian police just because they were playing football. An uninformed listener might have thought that what was being described was a scene in a territory controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. The next image he could have conjured up was that of a public execution of players on the sports field.

As in most countries in the world, football is the most popular sport in Serbia. Surely, the most widely known club from the southern Serbian province is the Priština Football Club; its golden era was the mid-1980s when it competed in Yugoslavia's Federal League I. Priština's best player ever was Fadil Vokrri, the current President of the so-called Football Association of Kosovo. That very same Fadil Vokrri decided in 1986, when he finished his season with Priština, to join no other club but the Partizan of Belgrade. Not the Partizani of Tirana, but the Partizan of Belgrade, where he played for three full years, while, incidentally, Slobodan Milošević was in power. During that period, Fadil Vokrri won caps 12 times while playing for Yugoslavia, and in a match with Flamurtari of Albania, he scored a goal and was voted the best player of the match. He says today that he still supports Belgrade's Partizan team. In addition to Vokrri, other Kosovo and Metohija Albanian footballers have played for Partizan, some of whom are legends in that club.

Does it sound believable that a player, allegedly abused, beaten and discriminated against simply because he was a member of a national minority, would play for the national team and a major club from the capital of that country for years? Some Council members are, I suppose, surprised, if not astonished, to hear such facts, considering what was heard at the previous Council meeting. Nothing can surprise me now, and I am expecting to hear, in a few minutes, new falsehoods, new lies, new propaganda outbursts.

One of the mantras always repeated by all representatives of Priština is that Kosovo and Metohija Albanians were loyal and good citizens of Yugoslavia before Slobodan Milošević took over the reins of power. That contention is simply another historically unfounded fabrication propagated throughout the international community in order to win support for the separatism and ethnic cleansing systematically conducted in Kosovo and Metohija over the past 100 years.

It is clear that systematic nationalism and separatism are at work in Kosovo and Metohija, the ideological backbone of which has, for years, been the League of Prizren, founded in 1878, which had the single goal of unifying all territories in the Balkans populated by Albanians into one State, bringing into question the territorial integrity not only of Serbia, but also of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece and other countries in the region. Unfortunately, it is patently obvious that some individuals, countries and international organizations have played a role in that regard, as revealed by the example of William Walker, former Head of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Kosovo Verification Mission. On the basis of his hastily cobbled together assessments about Radek, a decision was taken to bomb Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Today, 17 years later, William Walker is considered an honorary citizen of Albania, a hero of Kosovo, on whom Priština has awarded multiple decorations. William Walker is one of the few people who openly oppose the establishment of an expert court to try the crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army, the establishment of which has been supported by the Security Council. He recently stated on Albanian television's top channel that he supports the idea of a greater Albania, that is, the unification of Albania and Kosovo.

Ms. Çitaku will presumably again speak about genocide and ethnic cleansing; however, that is simply the propaganda that she typically indulges in at Council meetings. I would like to warn the Council in advance to expect propaganda and lies. The basic definition of genocide, war crimes and ethnic cleansing is that of the destruction or expulsion of a population. Serbia's representatives are on record as stating, millions of times, that each and every crime should be punished.

However, history has failed to record a genocide after which those people who allegedly committed genocide have dwindled to 10 times fewer than before, while the number of people against whom that genocide was allegedly committed has grown substantially higher than before.

I would like the Council to remember that out of 427 localities, the Serbs have been expelled from 311. That is indeed ethnic cleansing of Serbs, however. The statistics make for disturbing and painful reading. The data I shall present are not from Serbian sources; they are drawn from the 1981 census at the time of Tito, before Milošević, and from the census taken in Kosovo by the Priština authorities in 2011.

Priština, as the Council is aware, is the seat of the Priština authorities and the largest city in Kosovo. In 1981, just 35 years ago, there were 43,875 Serbs living in Priština, and according to the 2011 census there remained just 430 — only 430. Therefore, 35 years ago there were 43,875, and now the number is 430. If one can count and deal with numbers, that is 100 times fewer people. In 1981, 140,043 Albanians lived in that city, and in the year 2011 the number of Albanians grew to 194,953. What kind of genocide or ethnic cleansing of Albanians can be demonstrated here?

In Uroševac in the year 1981 there were 18,285 Serbs, and in the year 2011 — listen carefully — there were just 32. That is 600 times fewer people. In 1981, 17,791 Serbs and Montenegrins lived in Peć, and in the year 2011 just 332 Serbs lived there. The town of Peć is where the Serbian Orthodox Church was established in the thirteenth century, and the Patriarchate of Peć, which is included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites, is also located there. In the year 1981, 1,898 Serbs lived in Đakovica, today just 17 Serbs live there. In Podujevo they numbered 2,242; today there are 12, almost 200 times fewer. In the town where I was born, Prizren, the fourteenth century throne of Serbia, there were 11,651 Serbs living there in 1981, and by 2011 just 27 of them remained, according to United Nations statistics. Remember, the latter figures are drawn from United Nations statistical data, published in United Nations documents. Today there are only 27 persons, which is 400 times fewer.

What else can I say? Any comment seems to be vacuous in the face of this truth, these statistics and these facts. But we will let the representative of Priština engage in her propaganda; no doubt she will. However, I want the Council to realize that what I have shown is a realistic picture of the Serbs living in Kosovo. After all those events and centuries of problems in Kosovo and Metojiha, the situation today is that the ethnic cleansing of the Serbs has practically occurred. We are not even comparing statistics for the last one or two hundred years. We are comparing the results of the 1981 census that counted more than 40,000 Serbs living in Pristina.

Let me now turn to the report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General. The current and every future report of the Secretary-General on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) should be also viewed in that broader historical context, which attests to the complexity of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, and may contribute to a better understanding of the genesis of this question.

The report before us has been structured somewhat differently from previous ones. It introduces new sections — on the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina and on partnership and cooperation, for instance. In the part related to the normalization of relations, the importance of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities is presented inadequately. It appears to be reduced to an administrative item; and it is fleetingly referred to in paragraphs 18 and 19 of the report. As is known, the association/community has not yet been established. Let me recall also on this occasion that the quest for an agreement in Brussels was motivated by the urge to find a way to protect, systematically and institutionally, the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija because of the non-existence of proper institutional mechanisms to effectively protect its interests. Under the Brussels Agreement, it is precisely the association/community of Serb majority municipalities that is charged with that task, which substantively builds on Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). Instead of being the central issue to be implemented as soon as possible, its establishment has been the subject of political blackmail. After all, the United States Vice-President Biden also said during his recent visit to Belgrade and Pristina that it was necessary to establish the association/community of Serb majority municipalities expeditiously as a condition for the process of regional stability and reconciliation.

I have to note that this report makes no mention of the situation of the Serbian and other communities south of the Ibar River either, where the majority of the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija live. In doing so, I

would like to emphasize that not all problems are, nor can they be, related exclusively to the area north of the Ibar River. Disregard for the human rights and the problems encountered by the Serbs and the members of other communities, especially the Goranci, south of the Ibar River serves to amplify their feeling of isolation, neglect and hopelessness. The manner in which the concept document of the Kosovo authorities relating to returns is mentioned in the report creates a fictitious picture that Pristina is doing something serious in that regard. However, past experience gives us cause to believe otherwise. The absence of credible census data is invoked as a reason, or an excuse, for a whole range of concrete problems, from returns to the failure to adopt budgets in the four municipalities in the northern part of the province. All along, however, the following fact is glossed over, namely, that a census engineered by Pristina, one politically motivated, is unacceptable for a number of reasons. Such a census could hardly be used to improve the situation of the Serbs. After all, the situation could be improved even without a census if goodwill alone existed. And the incorporation of the sections on the rule of law and human rights under one heading glosses over the issue of the human rights of members of the minority communities.

To note simply that the level of returns is unacceptably low is not good enough; concrete reasons are needed to explain why the situation is so worrisome. Let me mention just some of them, including the administrative, institutional and legal obstacles to returns and the lack of security for the internally displaced persons to integrate locally in central Serbia —which is not the result of a conscious choice, but of the absence of any other alternative. The question of returns is inseparably linked to the protection and realization of the property rights of the Serbian population, including internally displaced persons.

The self-defeating fact is that sustainable returns have been realized only by some 4,000 persons, or 1.9 per cent. A tedious regurgitation of partial statistics related to the assaults on the life, security and the property of the Serbs and other non-Albanians is tantamount to casting a shadow of relativity on their civilization —persecution on an ethnic or religious basis that is unacceptable. The numerous cases of desecration, destruction and attacks on Serbian cultural and religious sites and the spreading of falsehoods, such as the one that mass graves are located next to the Church of Christ the Saviour in Pristina, are also unacceptable. Those fabrications have been spread for years now. The Director of the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Pristina said on 14 June that a witness had come forward who testified that excavations had been carried out 12 and 13 June 1999 and that there is reason to believe that the bodies of Kosovo and Metohija Albanians were buried at that location.

At Belgrade's request, excavations were undertaken on two occasions, on 13-14 and 27 July this year. The excavations were attended by Kosovo representatives alongside officials from the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and representatives from Belgrade. It was established that there were no human remains or graves at the location. The spreading of the misinformation primarily served the purpose of seizing space in downtown Pristina where the Church of Christ the Saviour and the land are located, but also to discredit the Serbian Orthodox Church. And just to recall: the Church has never been completed; the Pristina authorities turned it into a public lavatory and a podium to shoot music videos featuring scantily clad singers, which is telltale evidence of Pristina's attitude towards the Serbian cultural and religious heritage.

The returns realized thus far attest to the fact that all the actors involved have failed the return process. It behooves all of us to change that and create conditions in which displaced persons will be given the choice of return or local integration, not only in words but also in deeds. To do so, however, elementary conditions in places of return regarding personal and property security, infrastructure and access to public services must be fulfilled. In that sense, I salute the call made in the report to the leaders of all sides to refocus on safe and sustainable returns of internally displaced persons.

What all the reports of the Secretary-General, including this one, have in common is the failure to characterize the incidents in Kosovo and Metohija as ethnically motivated. The report says, in one short sentence alone, that 86 incidents affecting members of minority communities were reported during the period under review; most of the victims were reported to be Kosovo Serbs. Not a single other word appears at all. An account of the reaction by relevant police, prosecutorial and judicial authorities is missing. Short of that, all attacks and other criminal offences against Serbs are depersonalized and reduced to statistics. The ultimate and most dangerous consequence of such an approach is gradual acceptance by all, including the international community, of virtual impunity for criminal offences

committed against the Serbs and other non-Albanians, including murder. Pristina's ban on the import of Serbian language textbooks into Kosovo and Metohija shows the extent to which Pristina is prepared to go to deny the Serbian community their rights. That practice also existed before, albeit sporadically, but the confiscation of all books in the Serbian language became a regular practice at the beginning of June when the St. Vitus Day Book Fair, scheduled to take place at Gračanica from 15 June to 1 July, had to be cancelled.

Security in Kosovo and Metohija has always been unstable. The radicalization of the political climate and the worsening of the security situation because of the rise of political and religious extremism only increased the instability. The report in front of us contains references to fighters from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant who come from Kosovo and Metohija. With respect to the size of population, the Kosovo and Metohija Albanians account for the largest percentage of those fighting in the ranks of that terrorist organization. It is unnecessary to speak about the troubling consequences of that situation.

In the interests of regional stability and ever-better Serbian-Albanian relations, the Republic of Serbia will continue the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. We shall continue the policy of the peaceful settlement of conflicts by addressing the normalization of relations responsibly and implementing the agreements reached in Brussels fully. The question of Kosovo and Metohija transcends the issues of territorial integrity and national identity. It is the tipping point that will define, long-term, the Serbian-Albanian relations, on which the stability and economic prospects of the entire region depend. Irrespective of the frequent lack of constructiveness on the other side, we shall continue to work arduously on strengthening relations, building confidence and promoting European values and perspectives for both peoples. We do not want the situation in Kosovo and Metohija to be a latent threat to the stability and progress of Serbia and the region. We shall work in good faith on resolving disputes peacefully, well aware that a long process lies ahead and that — to make things worse — we often lack an interlocutor to share with us a vision of a prosperous and politically forward-looking region.

I therefore call on the countries that have not recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo to persevere, despite the pressures that many of ythem are exposed to, as part of their consistent respect for international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the supreme authority of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security, including resolution 1244 (1999), which upholds the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. Bear in mind that support by the international community is of key importance for success in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, one of few successful examples of the peaceful settlement of disputes in the world. Change in the position of States that have not recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo would affect negatively the continuation of the constructive attitude of the parties in the dialogue and the implementation of the agreements reached so far. That is what we ask for: an opportunity for dialogue and agreement in full accordance with international law, instead of unilateral acts and disrespect for the norms of the international legal order. Let me recall that international law is universal and that it applies to all, which is true also of its violation. What Serbia has experienced since 1998-19999 may befall any other country in the world.

At the same time, I call on the countries that use their statements in this organ to call for the violation of its legally binding resolutions not to do so. Let me repeat: under resolution 1244 (1999), adopted in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, Kosovo and Metohija is part of the Republic of Serbia, under interim administration by a United Nations mission. The resolution continues to be the valid legal basis of the administrative regime in Kosovo and Metohija, which can be changed only by the adoption of a new Security Council resolution, which has not happened thus far. I take this opportunity to call also on the countries that have recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo to reconsider their decision against the background of all-important facts.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: It is always a great honour for me to be able to come here and speak before the Security Council on behalf of my country. It is not only an honour. It is also an emotional experience, because at times when we were voiceless, when our most basic human rights were being targeted in the most brutal way by the Serbian military and paramilitary forces, all in the Council spoke up. They became our voice and our hope. They restored our faith in humanity. They restored our belief that, no matter whether one is big

or small, powerful or powerless, if you fight for a just cause, you are never alone.

Since 1993 this organ has adopted seven resolutions related to Kosovo — resolutions calling for peace and putting an end to the war. For that we will be forever grateful. Dozens of presidential statements have also been issued, including presidential statement S/PRST/2005/51, on 24 October 2005, wherein the Council called for the start of a political process to determine Kosovo's future status.

In honouring the will of the people of Kosovo, and under the mediation of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Kosovo has a final status. Kosovo is a free, independent and a sovereign State. And yet again, at Serbia's request, the International Court of Justice ruled unambiguously that Kosovo was within its rights when it declared independence and that it did not violate any international law, resolution 1244 (1999) or the constitutional framework. Kosovo today is a young republic. It faces challenges of course, but not the kind of challenges that would require us to meet every three months and take up the Councill's valuable time, which is in heavy demand for issues of much greater need and importance.

Once we were a nation of refugees; today we are not. But there are 20 million refugees in the world today, the largest number since the Second World War. There are millions of women who are subjected to sexual violence in areas of conflict, just like our women were during the war in Kosovo. There are children who are in desperate need of food, medicine and shelter, just like our children once were. The millions that are spent annually to maintain the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) could be put to much better use. To justify my point, I am going to quote the report of the Secretary-General:

> "a fight erupted between a Kosovo Serb and a Kosovo Albanian over a parking space." (*S/2016/666, para. 12*)

On a serious note, if the Council decides to hold a meeting every time people fight about parking spaces in New York, or any other place in the world for that matter, it would not have any time to talk about anything else.

Another example from the report:

> "funds were stolen from the Orthodox Monastery of St. Jovan." (*ibid., para. 27*)

Actually, it was tips that were stolen. Most of the incidents detailed in the UNMIK report are of that nature, and they have nothing to do with inter-ethnic violence. That is not to say that we live in paradise. Kosovo today is still not the Kosovo we dreamed and fought for. A lot needs to be done to strengthen the rule of law and to fight corruption and organized crime, just like in any young country.

Although, together with our international partners, tremendous work has been accomplished in that regard, we recognize that there is still more to be done. Our citizens deserve equal opportunities to prosper regardless of their ethnic, religious or political backgrounds. We owe it to them, as they, every day, more and more, are giving us reasons to be proud with their hard work, selfless dedication and sacrifice. We do not have to look far to be inspired by the extraordinary stories of our people. Take the story of Fahrije Hoti from the village of Krusha. Her husband, along with 241 civilians, was massacred by Serbian forces in March 1999. In that small village, 139 women became widows overnight, 500 children fatherless.

But, because of Fahrije and other women like her, Kruša is no longer known only for its tragic past. After the war, they came back to find their houses in ashes. However, they did not despair; they did not lose themselves to hatred or revenge. They rebuilt their homes and they started working on their farms. They opened small businesses and shops, with very little or no institutional support. Because of Fahrije and other widows of Kruša, today there is smoke coming out of every chimney; there is life in that village. Despite Fahrije's tragic past, although she was never offered an apology, she talks about forgiveness:

> "I will never be able to forget what happened. But to forgive is human. A person cannot live if she or he does not forgive. That would be too heavy a burden to carry."

Fahrije is still waiting for the remains of her husband. He is still classified as missing.

Kosovo is ready to move on, but Serbia needs to be ready to let go. Serbia needs to reflect on its past and learn from it. We in Kosovo do not want to leave our children with any burden from the past. Last month, Kosovo President Hashim Thaçi visited and paid his respects at two memorials honouring Serbian civilians killed after the 1999 war in Kosovo. Two of them were children. Although we never managed to shed light on

those events, and bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice, nonetheless we will never condone violence by anyone, and we will continue to ask for justice to be made. I would note that those acts happened at a time when our police and justice system was run by UNMIK. We will also continue to fight for justice for the 1,262 children that were killed in Kosovo during the war by Serbian military and paramilitary forces — for most of whom no one ever went to trial, despite clear evidence on who the perpetrators were.

While Kosovo goes to great lengths and undertakes unprecedented measures to contribute to peace and stability in the region, I must ask what Serbia doing. They want to erect a statue of Slobodan Milošević. What is the message that Serbia wants to send to victims from Vukovar, Srebrenica and Kosovo? Is that how Serbia views reconciliation? Rehabilitating the most notorious war criminal in Europe since the Second World War? And, more important, what message is Serbia sending to its own people? After all, Milošević and his regime were responsible for Serbian lives lost as well.

As was revealed by Serbian officials, six youngsters were killed in Peć in 1998, the so-called Panda Bar case. Back then, the Kosovo Liberation Army was blamed. But the truth was, as stated by Serbian officials two years ago, Serbian paramilitary forces were the perpetrators of that terrible act. But no matter how Serbia acts, we will not allow Serbia to drag us into a discourse of hatred and impunity. We will move forward, and we hope that Serbia will join us and the rest of the region on this journey. After all, we are neighbours. We are committed to the dialogue in Brussels, but we also believe that the process needs to become more dynamic, and especially more results-oriented. Dialogue is important, but implementation and good faith are everything.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo, I want to reiterate that, in line with our Constitution, we will implement every single agreement reached in Brussels. But our job is made difficult when Serbia continues to finance parallel institutions throughout Kosovo and tries to build colonies in northern Kosovo, violating not only our Constitution, but also resolution 1244 (1999). The current situation is rather paradoxical. While Serbia takes part in the Brussels dialogue for the normalization of relations with Kosovo, it continues to meddle in our internal affairs by supporting the operations of its parallel structures in Kosovo, in breach of the Brussels Agreement reached on the 19 April 2013.

That dualism of partially implementing Brussels agreements on one hand, while maintaining parallel structures on the other hand, allows Serbia to report at the European Union about progress in implementation and maintain its interference in Kosovo intact. In some ways, the implementation becomes a cover for interference and parallelism by Serbia. On the surface it looks as if the agreements are being implemented, but in reality the situation remains contradictory and far from what we agreed in Brussels.

Kosovo institutions show their commitment through acts. Since 2013, in addition to the annual budget, northern Serbian-majority municipalities received an additional €10 million from the special fund established to improve the quality of life of its citizens and to integrate northern municipalities. The European Union alone invested over €54 million in different projects in that part of Kosovo in the last three years. We will not stop there. We will do everything we can to demonstrate, through action, that any citizen of Kosovo, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, can feel at home and live without fear.

Kosovo will continue to be an active member of the coalition of nations fighting terrorism. Attacks in the streets of Nice, Turkey, Afghanistan and many other recent tragic incidents remind us that we are fighting a borderless war. While we express our deepest condolences for all the lives lost, let me reassure the Council that we will do everything we can to fight that evil, which strives to implant fear and demolish our way of life.

We in Kosovo are a multireligious and multicultural society. In Kosovo there are cities where mosques and Catholic and Orthodox churches share the same courtyard. We have always coexisted peacefully. Today, Kosovo is a secular republic. No matter how one prays, whether one believes in God, in nature or in evolution, as long as he or she is a law-abiding citizen, he or she will live in peace.

Those are values that we hold dear, and we will fight to defend them. For that reason, we have taken very serious measures to fight the phenomena of foreign fighters and radicalization. Kosovo was one of the first countries in Europe to adopt appropriate legislation and strategies to counter violent extremism. But we have gone far beyond words. Some 19 non-governmental

organizations that fuelled radicalization and that were financed with suspicious funds have been shut down. The Kosovo Police has initiated investigations against 199 people, and 102 people have been arrested. Seventy were indicted, and 34 people have already been convicted.

Today, around 50 Kosovars are in Syria and Iraq. However, because of the measures taken by our law-enforcement mechanisms, the number of Kosovars who have joined the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant over the past 12 months is zero. I would like to quote United States Vice-President Biden, who, during his recent visit to the region, not only praised Kosovo's actions in countering violent extremism but also clearly said, "Kosovo is an example to follow".

During the reporting period, our international status was strengthened by the recognition of our independence by Suriname, by our becoming part of the Apostolic Convention and by our joining the International Exhibitions Bureau as its one hundred and seventieth member. In addition, Kosovo established diplomatic relations with three other countries, thereby expanding and strengthening our ties with the free world.

While the overall political discourse in Kosovo remains fierce, and while political parties are expressing their disagreements on some very sensitive and important issues, including the border demarcation with Montenegro, all of those parties were unanimous in condemning violence, including, specifically, the three attacks that occurred in the past few weeks in the Parliament building, at a public broadcasting company and in a private home. Police and other Kosovar and international law-enforcement mechanisms are working hard to bring the perpetrators to justice. There is no room for violence in our new republic, as we are struggling every day to build dialogue among ourselves and with our neighbours. That is the only way forward.

Although the sky might sometimes seem grey, I know that there is hope for Kosovo. I know that because our people, our young people, are giving us shining examples every day. Doruntina Sylejmani, a teenager from Kosovo, brought home a medal from the International Mathematical Olympiad. In a tough and rigorous competition, with the best and brightest from all around the globe, Doruntina won. Although she comes from a country that still needs to do a lot to improve the quality of education, she won, thereby inspiring thousands of young Kosovar children to dedicate themselves to science.

Then there is our golden pride, Majlinda Kelmendi, who brought us our first Olympic medal ever. Majlinda was offered millions to compete for other countries while Kosovo was still struggling to become a member of the International Olympic Committee. She declined those offers and waited for her chance to represent her country. She gave us all a lesson, especially those of us working in the public sector, that not everything is for sale and that there are things that money cannot buy. She became a hero to her people and an inspiration worldwide, as her story was showcased across the globe.

Women like Fahrije, Doruntina and Majlinda are the new heroes of Kosovo. They push our limits and make us become a better version of ourselves. They teach us that there is no excuse for failure, that no dream is too big and no hope is too high if we work hard and put our hearts into it.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and share his considerations and views.

We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his briefing on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Mr. Tanin's statement confirms that the situation in the province is far from being normal. In a great many respects the trend is of course towards a deterioration. Naturally, there was no objectivity in the statement of Ms. Çitaku, as is often the case.

The situation in the province remains unstable. We are again forced to note the continuing poor level of security for Serbs in Kosovo. The consequences of that are unceasing attacks on them by Kosovars, including with the use of Molotov cocktails. Towards the end of June, similar incidents took place during the celebration of a historical event of great importance for Serbs, the Battle of Kosovo. Manifestations of aggression are regularly experienced not only by tourists and pilgrims but also by journalists and those refugees and internally displaced persons who dare to return to their homes. All of that is almost completely ignored by the authorities.

There is concern regarding the fate of Serb religious and historico-cultural facilities and heritage sites in Kosovo. The transfer of responsibility for their protection from the relevant international presences to the Kosovo Police has not resolved the issue of their security and safety. More robust guarantees, including legal ones, are needed, and they should be enshrined in Priština's list of obligations.

The situation around the unfinished Christ the Saviour Church in Priština, which could serve as a symbol of religious tolerance, persists. Instead of rapidly resolving that long-lasting problem, the Kosovo authorities have launched excavations within its perimeter to find hidden, buried remains of Albanians repressed by Serbs, which, by the way, as was expected, never turned up. The unfinished structure has been repeatedly desecrated by vandals during that process.

The dialogue between Belgrade and Priština is in a deep freeze. The Kosovo authorities brazenly demonstrate their unwillingness to fulfil key agreements providing for the creation of a community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo. Priština is attempting to justify its unconstructive approach by putting its own, less significant conditions, mostly economic in nature, ones that require considerably more time for comprehensive analysis and assessment. Those who end up falling hostage to such shady and dubious manipulations are the ordinary people, who continue to suffer from all possible types of discrimination on the part of the Priština institutions.

By way of illustration, allow me to recall the campaign launched in Serbian-speaking municipalities aimed at replacing Serbian forms of identification documents with Kosovar ones. Those refusing to do so have experienced difficulties in accessing services that require proof of identity, as well as in crossing administrative borders and lines. Such initiatives are not provided for under resolution 1244 (1999) and represent a dangerous "improptu" on the part of the Kosovo authorities.

Also of concern is the direction of discussions in Kosovo with regard to the so-called agreement on territorial delineation with Montenegro. Increasingly, nationalist calls are heard in favour of unifying all Albanian lands, including those in Serbia, Macedonia, Greece and Montenegro, and the creation of a "greater Albania". The core of such a pseudo-Albanian State, based on the words of high-level politicians in Priština and Tirana, will be formed by a comprehensive integration between Kosovo and Albania. We urge restraint from such rhetoric, fraught as it is with a further exacerbation of ethnic confrontations, not just in Kosovo but in the region as a whole.

We consider unacceptable recent statements in Priština claiming that the United Nations Mission in Kosovo is allegedly an instrument for Russian influence. We view such statements as attacks not only on the Mission, but also on the United Nations as a whole. We have noted the attempts by Kosovars to delay as long as possible the process of extending the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), despite the seemingly good relations between Brussels and Priština. The ratification of the relevant law did not occur until three days after the expiration of the previous mandate. Despite a significant narrowing of EULEX functions in Kosovo, Priština continues relentlessly to try to deprive that entity of its remaining executive authority and transfer it to the Kosovo authority. Such actions can only cause concern, inter alia in the light of the current prosecutions for serious crimes carried out by the Kosovo Liberation Army.

With regard to the special international tribunal created for that purpose, its initial work continues to be unjustifiably delayed, allowing the potential suspects and the accused to gain time so that they can identify and neutralize any witnesses to their actions. We expect that the new structure will learn from the mistakes of the past and operate decisively and effectively, holding to account all those guilty, regardless of their position in the political hierarchy.

We would again like to draw attention to the fact that, as a result of the weakness of the law-enforcement structures and the security system as a whole, the province constitutes to be a grey zone at the very heart of Europe, used as a safe harbour and transit corridor, not only by organized criminals, but also by radical Islamists. It also facilitates the use of the province's territory by extremist groups to recruit and train fighters. Kosovo is among the top three European sources of individuals fighting for Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). If any measures have been undertaken to end that situation, they are clearly insufficient.

We would also like to draw the Council's attention to the following. Within the framework of visits to

Priština by the Russian Ambassador to Belgrade, our colleagues requested, through the United Nations Mission in the province, the organization of contacts with the commanders of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) for an exchange of views regarding a settlement of the Kosovo problem. After stating that such a meeting required authorization from NATO Headquarters in Brussels, the KFOR command structure ended up not being able to find any time to meet with the Russian party. We deeply regret that the KFOR leadership has drifted away from dialogue with Russia regarding Kosovo. We would like to underscore that NATO forces are present in the province in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999) and are operating under a Security Council-approved mandate. Ignoring Russia, which is a permanent member of the Security Council, is simply unacceptable. We also demand that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo include that episode in his quarterly report.

In conclusion, we would like to underscore that, given the unstable internal political and security situation and the ongoing inter-ethnic conflicts and given the deadlock in the dialogue between Belgrade and Priština and the problems regarding the implementation of agreements reached between the parties, we are convinced of the need to maintain a strong United Nations presence in the province and to adequately finance the operation. Regular consideration of the situation of Kosovo by the Council also remains very important. Resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully in force and remains the mandatory international legal basis for a settlement of the situation in the province.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing. I also welcome Ambassador Çitaku and Deputy Prime Minister Dačić back to the Council again.

I want to begin by congratulating the representatives from Serbia and from Kosovo on their success in the recent Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. The athletes did incredibly well, securing gold medals and no doubt making the countries and the region very proud in the process. As the Ambassador has said, Rio was quite special for Kosovo. For the first time, athletes competed under the Kosovo flag at the Olympic Games. Thanks to judoka Majilinda Kelmendi, Kosovo brought home its first-ever medal, and a gold one at that. That shows that Kosovo is not only a real contender on the international sporting stage, but also that it is increasingly and irreversibly integrating into the international community. Kosovo's membership in the Union of European Football Associations and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association only serve to reinforce that point. We should all welcome their progress.

I begin with that point because I want to contrast that positive, hopeful vision of Kosovo with the negative assessments that are so often shared in the Council every three months. We often hear in the Chamber about the numbers of people protesting in the streets of Priština, but we should also hear about the thousands who came out to celebrate Majilinda's return — the thousands who filled the streets in the hope for a better future for their country. Steps have been taken in this reporting cycle to help seize that future.

First, we welcome the progress made on the Specialist Chambers. Coming to terms with the past is a vital part of building a future for all in Kosovo. So we are pleased that a Registrar for the court has been appointed and that a Chief Prosecutor will be appointed soon.

Secondly, we welcome the return of the opposition to the Assembly. That is an important step, one that must be met with a sustained commitment to dialogue rather than a return to tear gas and protests.

Thirdly, we welcome the downsizing of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the increasing transfer of responsibility to Kosovo for its own rule of law. It will be important to get the transition period right and to continue to build the capacity of the Kosovo authorities through focused monitoring, mentoring and advice.

Challenges remain, of course. We are concerned that the dialogue has stalled. It needs new energy so that the benefits of the normalization of the relations between Kosovo and Serbia can be realized for all. I hope both sides can draw some hope from the literal bridge-building that is ongoing in Mitrovica. But for all the challenges, we also need to gain some perspective. This week, the Council has discussed the horrifying situation in Aleppo, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and yet another missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Yet we find ourselves again in the Chamber debating an issue that has no need to be on the Council's agenda.

Ambassador Çitaku has already given the example of the fight that took place over a car parking space.

That clearly is not a threat to international peace and security. It is not the only odd inclusion. Is a peaceful protest by taxi drivers or stone-throwing really worth reporting to the Council? While the United Kingdom has the utmost respect for UNMIK and the Special Representative, the inclusion of such low-level incidents detracts from the important reporting that UNMIK is carrying out. Therefore the United Kingdom once again calls again for a reduction both in the number of these meetings and of the reports. Not only will that allow UNMIK to provide better substantive reporting from UNMIK, but the Council can focus on other more pressing issues.

As I have said on previous occasions, we have to accept that discussions in this Chamber exist in a bygone era where Kosovo's independence, its sovereignty and its very existence are still questioned. We need only look to the Olympics to see that that era is over. Instead, ordinary Kosovars now look to Majlinda Kelmendi to begin a new golden era. Let us all help Kosovo seize that future rather than drag it back to the past here in New York.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing. China welcomes the presence and statement of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. China listened carefully to the statement of Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and understands Serbia's legitimate concerns on the question of Kosovo. Resolution 1244 (1999) constitutes an important legal basis for a solution to the question of Kosovo. A proper solution, acceptable to the parties concerned, must be reached through dialogue and negotiations, pursuant to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of relevant Security Council resolutions.

China appreciates the rigorous efforts undertaken by the Government of Serbia in seeking a political solution to the Kosovo question. We hope that both sides will continue with their high-level political dialogue, seek a lasting solution to the question of Kosovo and strive to maintain peace and security in the Balkans and the entire European region.

The current security situation in Kosovo is generally stable, but it faces a number of complex and uncertain factors. The parties concerned must effectively protect the legitimate rights of all ethnic communities of Kosovo, promote ethnic reconciliation, persevere in efforts to solve differences through dialogue and avoid taking any action that may further complicate the situation.

China appreciates the work undertaken by UNMIK under the leadership of Special Representative Tanin. We support UNMIK's continued implementation of Security Council mandates. We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force will enhance their coordination and play an active and constructive role for a proper solution to the Kosovo question.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): I thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, for his comprehensive briefing. I also welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku to the Security Council.

I will also start with the Rio Olympics. The gold medal in the women's 52 kilogramme judo division, won by Kosovar athlete Majlinda Kelmendi, was also one of the most emotional episodes in Japan, not because Ms. Kelmendi defeated the Japanese contestant in the semi-finals and the Japanese contestant won the bronze medal, but because all the Japanese people were moved by her achievement under such adverse conditions. And we all congratulated her for her gold medal wholeheartedly. I believe that gold medal made history at Kosovo's first Olympics, and Ms. Kelmendi's victory has sent a strong message of hope to the people of Kosovo.

The latest report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo gave me the impression that Kosovo has not yet qualified for a medal in its challenge of institution building. There were dozens of security incidents alleged during the reporting period. We do not see as much significant progress as expected in Serbia- Kosovo relations. The report of the Secretary-General, like previous ones, tells us that political tension remains.

We all know well that much more effort is needed to resolve a conflict once it erupts than to prevent a situation from turning into a conflict. Kosovo has performed well in its endeavours following the conflict, and is deemed to be a good example and precedent to follow. I am talking in general terms. In the aftermath of conflict, the society and community are mostly devastated — violence is all around, criminality is high, social justice is not assured, corruption is everywhere, access to public services is problematic and scarce and internally displaced persons are unable to return home. Even though political leaders tell the people that they are doing their utmost to assure democracy, good governance, the rule of law, human rights and safety and security, the people do not trust the Government. What is the remedy?

At the open debate of the Council in July on the issue of peacebuilding in Africa (see S/PV.7750), our Foreign Minister Mr. Fumio Kishida, encouraged us to focus on the significant role played by institution-building. That message can be also applied to Kosovo. For example, in order to eradicate violence and terror, the police forces in communities need to be trained. For enhanced rule of law and human rights, promoting capacity-building for legal institutions, courts and other judicial structures is crucial. As described in the report of the Secretary-General, we see efforts by the Kosovo authorities in the area of counter-terrorism.

Then comes the question of how to finance and sustain the institution-building. We know that Kosovo remains one of the poorest countries in Europe, largely reflecting its legacies of conflict. However, I would like to underline that Kosovo is a country rich in resources. Kosovo has natural resources. There is a coal mine and a zinc mine, and zinc appears to be the most promising sector for export. Agriculture is rich. It not only provides jobs for approximately 40 per cent of the population, but also remains a main creator of wealth through the farming of potatoes. Kosovo potatoes are of a very good quality. And Kosovo has now started exporting fruit, including berries, to Europe. It may not be common knowledge that Kosovo wines are good. The Kosovo wine industry faced a catastrophic decline in the 1990s, of course, but it is recovering now.

Again, institution-building matters. Measures such as taxation, revenue reform and fair welfare distribution are crucial to economic growth in conflict-affected countries like Kosovo. Effective tax collection ensures a sustainable budget and the allocation of national income to deal with the provision of public services. In a nutshell, the key to peace and security in Kosovo is the establishment of robust, functional institutions.

In paragraph 47 of the report of the Secretary-General, UNMIK

> "has provided operational assistance ... to law enforcement and judicial entities in Kosovo."

In my view, that sort of assistance is crucial. I encourage UNMIK to further its efforts in providing assistance to the Kosovo authorities in institution-building. It is my hope that Kosovo will be awarded a gold medal in the area of institution-building and be capable of standing on its own two feet.

In conclusion, I would like to express my strong expectation that the Kosovar people, who are well-qualified and well-equipped, will fulfil that challenge and thereby shape their own future.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing and again assure him of our full support. I also thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku for their statements.

My delegation has taken note of the conclusions and observations of the most recent report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and today's briefing on developments in the political and security situation in the territory of Kosovo.

Ukraine welcomes the reported improvements in the political conditions in Kosovo,

> "accompanied by a significant decrease in the pattern of protests, aggressive actions and disruptive tactics by various parties" (*S/2016/666, para. 3*).

At the same time, we regret that the practical implementation of agreements reached under the European Union-facilitated dialogue process between Belgrade and Pristina has not moved forward as significantly as we could have expected. Ukraine actively supports the pursuit of political dialogue between the two sides under the auspices of the European Union (EU).

In our view, there is no alternative to cooperation within the Brussels process. We hope that the

implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Kosovo and the European Union will be a factor in further stabilizing the situation and promoting a better atmosphere in the talks between Belgrade and Pristina. In that regard, we fully support the Secretary-General's call on both sides not only to resume their engagement, but to show renewed creativity and flexibility for compromise in order to decisively anchor Kosovo and the broader region on a path towards stability and development.

We also call on Belgrade and Pristina to put aside existing differences and to concentrate on issues such as the implementation of the agreement on energy and telecommunications, the opening of the Mitrovica bridge and the establishment of the association of Serb majority municipalities, among other things. Those particular issues could serve as an impetus towards further constructive dialogue. Ukraine believes it is now the precise moment to redouble efforts in fulfilling the provisions of the agreements of 19 April 2013 and 25 August 2015.

Ukraine maintains that another issue to which the parties should pay special attention is the safe and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons. As the Council knows, the problem is very much applicable to Ukraine as well. Due to external aggression, we already have over 1.8 million internally displaced persons. My country is making every possible effort to resolve the issue and, in that light, we fully support the overall approach of the Secretary-General, such that the rights of those who wish to return to their places of origin should be met. We believe that is an important precondition for durable reconciliation between Belgrade and Pristina.

Special attention should also be paid to the continuing assaults on the cultural and religious heritage of non-majority communities, which can further complicate tensions. Ukraine is convinced that the resolution of those problems will promote further political stability in Kosovo.

Ukraine strongly supports the important work carried out by UNMIK and the other international missions operating in Kosovo in promoting reconciliation, transitional justice and human rights and in supporting the normalization process between Belgrade and Pristina. In that regard, we welcome the extension of the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo for another two years. The decision taken by the EU Council in June is essential in furthering the effective work of the international mechanism for political stabilization and inter-communal reconciliation.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We join other members of the Security Council in thanking Special Representative Zahir Tanin for presenting the report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. We equally welcome Ambassador Vlora Çitaku.

The report of the Secretary-General highlights positive developments. We remain encouraged that the overall security situation in Kosovo remains stable and that political conditions have improved, with a significant decrease in the pattern of protests, aggressive actions and disruptive tactics by some parties.

We underline the fundamental role played by the United Nations, through UNMIK, in promoting security, stability, respect for human rights and institution-building, as well as its cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, and its engagement with Pristina and Belgrade.

A number of sensitive issues remain outstanding in the territory, and political tensions between the Government and opposition parties continue to undermine the normal functioning of Kosovo's institutions. The border demarcation agreement with Montenegro is the most contentious issue currently dominating the political debate in Kosovo. Equally, the agreement for the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo, signed almost one year ago, continues to be challenged by the opposition's rejection, with its implementation stalled.

On a positive note, we acknowledge that efforts to tackle organized crime and corruption in Kosovo have yielded positive results and that, since September 2015, no Kosovo citizen has been reported as having joined the conflicts in the Middle East. We also welcome the agreement reached by the Joint Working Group on Missing Persons with a view to increasing information exchange and organizing more frequent ad hoc informational meetings. We remain confident that the political leaders of Belgrade and Pristina will be able to

fulfil their commitments and implement the agreements reached under the European Union-facilitated dialogue. We hope that dialogue will proceed in good faith, in a results-oriented manner aimed at a better future with economic and social development for all of the people of the Balkans.

Finally, we underscore that resolution 1244 (1999) remains the applicable legal framework in achieving a comprehensive solution for Kosovo through dialogue and negotiation based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): We welcome First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku back to the Security Council for this quarterly briefing.

First of all, I would like to start by taking a moment to congratulate the athletes from both of their countries for the excellent display of sportsmanship in Rio de Janeiro. We would like to welcome Kosovo to the international athletic community, it having participated in the Olympic Games for the first time under its own flag and bringing home, as we have heard, a gold medal in judo. We are sure that years of training and practice went into that winning moment. We also salute Majlinda for making her country proud.

As the Council, we have also put years of effort into examining the situation in Kosovo. Over the years, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has assisted Kosovo in the development of multi-ethnic democratic institutions that uphold the rule of law and respect human rights. It is clear that UNMIK has largely fulfilled its mandate and should be further consolidated. We all receive weekly briefing notes from the field, and I draw the Council's attention to UNMIK's submissions as well. There is some excellent political reporting, it is true, but what does the Mission do? What are its remaining tasks? Do those tasks require 125 United Nations staff and other resources to fulfil them? As for the quarterly briefings, the Secretariat and the Security Council both have far more pressing business at hand. We urge fellow Council members to prudently adjust the reporting briefing period for UNMIK from three to six months.

None of that should be construed as a lack of support for Kosovo, however. Indeed, the opposite is true. The United States affirms its support for Kosovo on its journey to becoming a prosperous and peaceful multi-ethnic democracy, fully integrated into the international community. We believe that, when Kosovo succeeds, the entire region succeeds. A democratic, stable and independent Kosovo is a force for regional stability.

In that vein, we welcome Kosovo's and Serbia's efforts to pursue the normalization of relations through the European Union-facilitated dialogue talks. We continue to welcome European Union (EU) High Representative Mogherini's facilitation of the dialogue and commend leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina for taking the difficult decisions necessary to make progress in the talks.

Thankfully, work has finally started to revitalize the Austerlitz Bridge in Mitrovica, which will remove barriers that, for too long, have perpetuated and reinforced divisions rather than bringing people together. We would like to thank NATO and the NATO mission in Kosovo for their support for security during the revitalization of the bridge and for continued essential work to ensure a secure and safe environment in Kosovo.

We note with some disappointment that the pace of progress on normalization slowed over the past year. We call on the leaderships in Belgrade and Pristina to reinvigorate the dialogue process, including by rapidly reaching compromises and fully implementing the agreements Prime Minister Vučic and Prime Minister Mustafa reached in August 2015. The implementation of those agreements has lagged for too long. We call on leadership of both sides to uphold their political commitments and advance the dialogue without delay. Vice-President Biden recently visited Serbia and Kosovo, where he noted the important progress that both countries had made on the road to comprehensive normalization. In Belgrade, Vice-President Biden welcomed the progress Serbia had made towards its goal of EU accession and the difficult reforms it is making to get there. We encourage Prime Minister Vučić and President Nikolić to stay the course and carry on with the significant work that remains. Serbia's future prosperity lies with Europe and is dependent on a transparent and just society.

In Pristina, the Biden family was honoured by the Government of Kosovo, which named a road after the late Beau Biden, who served in Kosovo with the Department of Justice in 2001, helping to establish

judicial solutions and the rule of law. As Vice-President Biden noted, Kosovo has made tremendous progress since his previous visit in 2009. But as the Vice-President said, there is more work to be done. Kosovo's leaders have had to make very tough decisions for the future of their country. Kosovo's leaders need to continue to work with their neighbours. With regard to Serbia, I have already spoken about the need to fully implement dialogue agreements, and, with regard to Montenegro, Kosovo needs to ratify its agreement to demarcate their shared border so that Kosovo can continue advancing along its European path.

At the same time, Kosovo continues to face serious economic challenges that demand greater action by its Government. While the Government has taken some steps to introduce policies to foster economic growth, we encourage more progress to improve governance, combat corruption, increase transparency and bolster the rule of law. We welcome the extension of the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which will help strengthen justice and fight corruption there. Progress in those areas will help attract foreign investment, thereby contributing to Kosovo's development.

As the United States and Kosovo's international partners work with the Government to advance democratic and economic development, it is of serious concern that there are those in Kosovo who would seek to use violence and misinformation to derail the country's progress. The recent resumption, by some political parties, of the use of tear gas in the Assembly and the heinous attack against the public broadcaster have no place in a democracy. Such actions are counter to democratic values and threaten the welfare of the country and all of its people. We commend Kosovo President Thaçi for his personal efforts to advance reconciliation. Laying a wreath in Staro Gracko to commemorate the children killed by ethnically motivated criminals in 2003 was a courageous step to benefit the country.

We also welcome and encourage the important work that Kosovo is undertaking to address the serious problem of foreign fighters, which is a threat to us all and must be addressed collectively. That underscores the need for a responsible, inclusive approach to security challenges that fully integrates the entire region, including Kosovo, into the vital international institutions that are working to increase the security of our peoples. That must include INTERPOL, where we can cooperate and coordinate on issues vital to the national security of all United Nations States Members and where shared values bring us together. It serves no one's interests, except those of criminals and extremists, to prevent Kosovo from making the fullest possible contribution to ensuring its security and that of its neighbours.

In conclusion, as we gear up for the annual high-level meeting of the General Assembly, we note the progress that Kosovo is making in its bid for recognition and, one day, membership in the United Nations. We applaud Suriname's recent recognition of Kosovo. We call on all Member States to recognize Kosovo and welcome the country's people into the international community as they strive to take their rightful place as a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. It is good for Kosovo, good for the international Organization and good for the international community. And it is inevitable.

Mrs. Nuñez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for his briefing. I would also like to welcome and express my gratitude for the statement by Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. We have also paied close attention to the statement by Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

First, as we have said in previous statements, Uruguay believes that resolution 1244 (1999) is the internationally accepted legal basis for resolving the situation in Kosovo, which includes full respect for the principles of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia.

We are encouraged to hear that the political conditions in Kosovo are improving to some extent, as indicated in the most recent report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General and as just mentioned by Special Representative Tanin. Nevertheless, the challenges on the security front continue to be significant. There has been tension, attacks and other alarming incidents, including — and I would like to highlight this point — on members of the minority communities, many of them Kosovar Serbs. Uruguay regrets the occurrence of those incidents, expresses its firm rejection of the use of violence and encourages all efforts to find a way to promote peaceful and inclusive

dialogue in order to make progress towards resolving the problems of Kosovo.

We are discouraged by the lack of significant progress with regard to the practical implementation of the agreements reached within the context of the dialogue process undertaken between Belgrade and Pristina facilitated by the European Union. We urge all parties to step up the dialogue so as to reach compromise and make progress along the path towards stability and development.

Uruguay attaches the greatest importance to full respect for human rights. We understand that in the case of Kosovo what is of particular importance are the efforts undertaken on the issue of persons who disappeared in the recent conflict. We are particularly pleased to note the holding of a working session of the Joint Working Group on Missing Persons, in which the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) participated and at which Belgrade and Pristina agreed to increase their exchanges of information on specific cases. We believe that those steps, in addition to providing consolation to the families of the disappeared and healing the wounds of the past, are acts of justice that are important strides towards reconciliation.

My country is also concerned about the situation of the internally displaced. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that the total number of internally displaced persons in Kosovo at the end of June 2016 stood at 16,714. In that regard, we note with satisfaction the fact that the Kosovo authorities endorsed a concept document on the regulation of displaced persons and durable solutions. The document points to the need to establish a legal foundation to ensure accountability of the authorities and to define institutional mechanisms that would then facilitate the return of families and internally displaced persons in safe and sustainable conditions.

Another important aspect highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General is the phenomenon of migration through the region towards Europe. In that connection, we believe that regional cooperation focused on a human rights approach is fundamental.

I wish to conclude by reiterating the fact that Uruguay very much values the role played by UNMIK in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights. We also recognize the important role played by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. Moreover, we would like to highlight the substantial contribution of the United Nations agencies present on the ground.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by congratulating Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku of the Republic of Kosovo for their statements.

My delegation welcomes the fact that, despite some residual tension, there has been an improvement in the political situation in Kosovo, marked by a palpable decrease in demonstrations and violent acts, as well as the holding of legislative elections that unfolded without any major incident. Furthermore, we welcome the fact that the new President and the new Prime Minister have reaffirmed their commitment to the process of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina as launched under the auspices of European Union, as well as the fact that they are committed to the full implementation of all agreements already reached, including the agreement on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.

While we regret the lack of progress since the latest meeting held in Brussels, Senegal would like to encourage both parties to keep up the momentum towards improving the political situation. I encourage political actors in Kosovo to work to maintain a peaceful climate, which depends largely on the quality of the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. My delegation also encourages both parties to continue and intensify that dialogue to the highest possible level under the auspices of the European Union and urges partner countries with influence to exert that influence to promote the talks. Furthermore, my delegation welcomes the progress made with respect to integrating the judges, prosecutors and support staff of the Serbian judicial system into that of Kosovo pursuant to the relevant agreement between Belgrade and Pristina.

Further grounds for satisfaction for my country are the European Commission's positive assessment of Kosovo's fulfilment of requirements to advance its visa liberalization application, giving rise to the Commission's proposal to lift the European visa requirements for the

people of Kosovo, on the understanding that, by the day of adoption of the proposal, Kosovo would have ratified the agreement on territorial demarcation with Montenegro and strengthened its track record in the fight against organized crime and corruption. Finally, my delegation welcomes the efforts undertaken by the Government of Kosovo in terms of promoting the rule of law, as well as its intention to establish an inter-ministerial coordination group between ministries and relevant institutions.

It is for those reasons that the extension of the mandate of European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) through 14 June 2018 seems appropriate to us, as it will no doubt contribute to the consolidation of the achievements in the areas of the rule of law and human rights. Furthermore, we welcome the activities undertaken by UNMIK in terms of promoting reconciliation, transitional justice, human rights and support for the process of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

In addition to encouraging continued dialogue, Senegal would like to urge all stakeholders to work to calm the situation and make strides towards development by promoting the implementation of the agreements of 25 August 2015 in Northern Kosovo. We therefore reiterate our support for the joint European Union-United Nations programme aimed at building trust among communities by protecting their cultural heritage. Accordingly, we advocate strengthening cooperation on the exchange of information to resolve the issue of disappeared persons.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to again pay tribute to Special Representative Tanin for his enlightened leadership of UNMIK. We also welcome the positive contributions of the Kosovo Force, EULEX, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and, of course, the European Union, all involved players clearly committed to peace and progress in Kosovo.

Mr. Aboulwafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing. We would like to reiterate Egypt's complete support for his efforts. I would also like to welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku and to thank them for their statements.

Egypt wishes to reaffirm the importance of building on the absolute commitment voiced by the leaders of both communities to implement the agreements reached between them. There is also a need to spare no effort to achieve a peaceful, complete settlement of all pending issues between Belgrade and Pristina through dialogue and serious negotiations, based on the principle of goodwill and mutual respect shown by both sides within the framework of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as all the relevant Council resolutions, especially resolution 1244 (1999). That outcome can be achieved only by establishing a conducive environment in the region and the resumption of the political dialogue under the auspices of the European Union.

We also underscore the importance of making progress in the implementation of the August 2015 Agreement, including all its provisions, and of seizing the opportunity to achieve a lasting settlement, which would open the door to future economic and political development and prosperity for all peoples in the region. We also welcome the ratification a few months ago of the headquarters agreement with the Netherlands to host the Specialist Chambers to investigate war crimes. We hope that this will lay the foundations for the rule of law, justice and full reconciliation in Kosovo. We should provide all the necessary support to ensure that the Chambers are successful in its work, and we hope to see it establish its premises and begin to function as soon as possible.

We would also like to highlight the following efforts undertaken by the authorities of Kosovo: the voluntary repatriation of displaced persons, the protection of the religious and cultural heritage, efforts towards reconciliation and non-discrimination at all levels of society, the protection of minority rights and, of course, the strengthening of the rule of law. We must also provide support to the authorities to address the challenges posed by immigration and the spread of extremism and violence. We support the five-year strategy announced by the authorities to combat extremism. We hold out the hope that the most recent presidential elections will serve as a starting point for a successful internal political process.

We support the efforts by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Special Representative. We would also like to underscore the importance of strengthening coordination between the Mission and the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in order to fully implement the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Méndez Graterol (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. I also welcome the statement by Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign of Serbia. And I welcome the presence of Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates that strict adherence to international law — non-intervention and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of States and the peaceful settlement of disputes — is an essential element for the maintenance of international peace and security. In advocating for a peaceful settlement of the Kosovo issue, my country believes that resolution 1244 (1999) continues to be the applicable international legal basis for the achievement of a successful political solution in the interest of peace. In that regard, we call for ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia.

We also reiterate our support for the implementation of the First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, signed of 19 April 2013. In that context, the support of the United Nations remains crucial in Kosovo, particularly through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), so as to promote security, stability and respect for human rights. That work has been complemented by the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). We express once again that UNMIK, KFOR and EULEX, based on their respective mandates, should continue to play a proactive, balanced, neutral and complementary role to direct dialogue, with a view to promoting a lasting and mutually acceptable solution on the Kosovo issue.

Our country believes that dialogue and negotiations between Serbia and the local authorities in the province of Kosovo must be maintained so that the parties can reach a mutually acceptable solution on the issue. We regret that to date there has not been significant progress in that process, and we therefore encourage all the parties to intensify their efforts to reverse the situation. Of particular importance is the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo, among other aspects. We therefore urge the authorities of the province to work decisively to achieve that goal, as was agreed at the highest level in Brussels. Similarly, we consider it important to support the process of the voluntary return of Serbs displaced from their homes in Kosovo, in strict compliance with the 2013 Brussels agreements.

We consider it necessary to foster full respect for the human rights of minorities persons displaced from their places of origin, so that they can fully enjoy those rights free of discrimination. However, we are concerned by the ongoing incidents against Serbian Kosovar citizens in certain areas. In that regard, we once again urge that the appropriate measures be taken to rectify that situation and to prevent persecution and harassment based on ethnic or religious grounds. Furthermore, the reconciliation process requires ongoing efforts by the Joint Working Group on Missing Persons with a view to clarifying the fates of those who disappeared during the conflict. We welcome the results of the Working Group's meeting in June, whereby the parties committed to stepping up exchanges of information on specific cases and to organizing ad hoc operational meetings more frequently. In terms of cultural and religious heritage, we reiterate the need for the parties to work together in order to ensure their effective protection.

In the context of the fight against impunity, we encourage all parties to make efforts and take concrete steps that can lead to increased trust in the judiciary and the courts. We therefore urge them to intensify their efforts so that the Specialist Chambers can come into effect, which would be responsible for investigating the allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the armed conflict in Kosovo, as one more step towards the reconciliation process between the parties.

In conclusion, we once again encourage the parties to redouble their efforts to find a political solution that is peaceful, just and lasting within the framework of international law, and in full compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) and the Brussels agreements of 2013.

Ms. Schwalger (New Zealand): I welcome First Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku to the Security Council today, and I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing.

New Zealand welcomes progress in the political situation in Kosovo, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/666) and in Special Representative Tanin's briefing. In particular, we are pleased to see some improvement in the standards of political engagement, following the disruptive incidents in the Kosovo Assembly earlier this year. We

look forward to an even more settled political future for Kosovo, free from political violence and with due respect for its democratic institutions of Government and for its courts and judges.

In a climate where political disillusionment is apparently increasing, it is particularly important to ensure all people, in particular youth, feel they have a stake in Kosovo's future. We continue to call for renewed efforts to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia. In that regard, we hope that more progress can be made in implementing agreements reached between the two sides, including in relation to energy, telecommunications and Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.Kosovars and Serbians will always be neighbours, and all will benefit from pursuing reconciliation and developing habits of peaceful coexistence.

We welcome efforts by the European Union (EU), including by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, to facilitate dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. It is encouraging that European leaders remain focused on supporting reconciliation in Kosovo and the normalization of relations in the region. Reconciliation efforts will be strengthened by confronting the past in order that people can move forward together. We therefore welcome the progress made towards establishing the Specialist Chambers to try cases brought forward by the EU Special Investigative Task Force. We hope that the court will be operational this year, with support from the EU and, in particular, of the Netherlands.

Finally, we continue to support the Security Council considering the adoption of a more flexible approach to how it considers this agenda item, mindful of the many other issues of more immediate gravity that the Council has to deal with.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his briefing. I assure him once again of our support in the exercise of his functions. I also thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Kosovo's Ambassador, Ms. Vlora Çitaku, for their statements.

The future of Kosovo and its regional integration no longer primarily plays out in the Security Council, but in the framework of the political dialogue held under the auspices of the European Union. New progress has been made on that front in recent months, in particular with the start of work on the bridge in Mitrovica, which we welcome.

Nevertheless, those advances are not enough. We expect that all the commitments made in the context of the agreements concluded under the auspices of the European Union will be implemented as soon as possible, including with regard to the setting up of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which is a key element of the dialogue. We therefore urgently call upon the Kosovar and Serbian authorities to intensify their efforts to produce further concrete results in the coming months. It is particularly important that the dialogue at the political level can resume as soon as possible.

The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina remains generally a vital prerequisite for their respective progress on the path towards European integration, which was once again encouraged at the Paris-Balkans 2016 Summit, held on 4 July.

The continuation of efforts to consolidate the rule of law in Kosovo must also remain a priority. That first concerns the fight against impunity. We had already had an opportunity to welcome the swift ratification by the President of Kosovo of the headquarters agreement signed with the Dutch Government for the installation of Specialist Chambers in The Hague. That is a crucial step. We know that the Kosovo authorities work to enable all components of the Specialist Chambers to start functioning as soon as possible and to take action against those responsible for the crimes set out in the Marty report. We encourage them to continue along that path.

The consolidation of the rule of law also involves the fight against radicalization in all its forms. France welcomes the unconditional commitment of Kosovo in that area, both locally and in the international coalition against Da'esh. I also take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which contributes every day to the rule of law and security in Kosovo and whose mandate was just renewed by the Council of the European Union.

France also welcomes the relative decline in tension registered in Kosovo's internal political scene since the presidential election in February. The building of an independent, modern, democratic State also entails the

establishment of a peaceful and responsible dialogue among the various stakeholders of the political scene, in compliance with the provisions of the Constitution and in the framework of existing institutions. Violence, hateful rhetoric and disruptions in the proceeedings of the legitimately elected Assembly have no place in the type of society that the overwhelming majority of Kosovar citizens aspire to. We will therefore continue to condemn them with the same firmness, whatever the reasons. We also remain concerned about the persistence of incidents against members of minority communities and against religious and cultural heritage sites.

It is important that the Kosovo authorities continue to make efforts in favour of dialogue among the different political forces and for the establishment of a peaceful and inclusive society. The reforms implemented in the framework of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union are already leading in that direction. Kosovo can count on our full support in that regard.

Finally, France continues to support the efforts of the Kosovar authorities to achieve international recognition of their State. Kosovo's participation in the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeior, crowned by the country's first Olympic gold medal, in judo, is an important symbolic step in that regard.

I conclude by recalling once again our hope for a continued gradual transfer of competencies from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo to the State's authorities, as well as for a review of the cycle of the Council's review of the situation in Kosovo, in view of the continuous progress with regard to the consolidation of Kosovo's institutions and the bilateral dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. Our debates seem to be out of sync with those enouraging developments.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like the speakers who took the floor before me, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, and to welcome the presence of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, as well as Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

As the Security Council is well aware, without prejudice to its position of principle, Spain has always been prepared to constructively support measures and processes that are compatible with our position and that can as a benefit the people of the territory of Kosovo as a whole. In that context, Spain has from the outset supported the high-level talks between Pristina and Belgrade facilitated by the European Union. We believe that the dialogue should continue to play a key role and remain a priority. It is very important for the dialogue to continue not only at a technical level, but above all at the political level. It is crucial that the agreements achieved thus far be implemented and that work continues in the joint quest to find solutions to specific problems encountered by the citizens of Kosovo.

We are aware of the fact that circumstances such as respective cycles of elections explain the absence in recent months of high-level meetings in the framework of that dialogue. However, now that those events are behind us, it is time for the parties to decisively return to the dialogue with renewed political courage. We are also aware that none of the parties is 100 per cent satisfied by the dialogue. That is logical, for the process is still a work in progress. But the progress made since the process began, in April 2013, is undeniable. There has been progress at the political level and citizens have enjoyed specific benefits. That should be enough to justify the renewal of the parties' decisive and genuine commitment to the process.

In the same manner and for the same reason, there must also be courage and political will to implement the commitments undertaken to date. In that respect, Spain remains convinced that the establishment of Serb-majority communities and municipalities is essential and must be prioritized. That is both important for both parties and an unavoidable step in achieving genuine reconciliation among the various communities in Kosovo. While it is a key issue, unfortunately it remains unresolved.

I would like to again express Spain's full support for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission and Kosovo and for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. My country is fully aware of the important continuing role that the Mission is called upon to play in Kosovo today. We highly commend Special Representative Tanin's prioritized attention to reconciliation, among other issues, and to communities living peacefully among one another, with full respect for human rights. All of those issues are essential if we truly wish to definitively overcome the situation that gave rise to the conflict in Kosovo in the first place.

The role of political leaders and representatives is in all self-defined democratic societies. Their responsibilities lie beyond mere management of public affairs. They must serve as an example of living together in peace. In that respect we must take note of the positive elements indicated by the Special Representative and highlighted in the report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General that relate to certain improvements in the political environment in Priština. However, that path still lies far ahead. We urge all political actors to definitively reject all incendiary rhetoric and support for violent or illegal actions and to fight such actions with the weapon of the law, thereby setting a responsible example in the exercise of public functions.

It is also our responsibility to do what is right here at the Security Council. Presentations in our regularly scheduled debates should always take place in a constructive spirit, with a view to achieving definitive reconciliation, as we all desire, and not just the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). Hence the importance of those discussions and of organizing them on a regular basis.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Malaysia.

My delegation welcomes His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku back to New York and thanks them for their statements. We also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zahir Tanin for his briefing.

Malaysia congratulates Serbia on its formation of a new Government following the recent general elections, and His Excellency Mr. Dačić in particular on his reappointment. We also congratulate Kosovo for its participation in the Olympic games in Rio de Janeiro and for winning a gold medal in its first-ever, and memorable, participation in the Olympics.

Malaysia is encouraged by the improvements in the political and economic situation in Kosovo. The economy seems to be steadily recovering, following the implementation of reform measures on the part of the Kosovo Government. We call on the leaders of Kosovo to remain steadfast in implementing the socioeconomic reforms, particularly in tackling the problem of unemployment. Those reforms are especially important in view of Kosovo's aspiration to achieve European integration, with a view to promoting peace, stability and prosperity for Kosovo and the region.

On the political front, Malaysia has noted in the report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General a significant reduction in the number of violent protests by various parties in Kosovo. Such protests had featured prominently in prior reports of the Secretary-General. We also welcome the progress made in the integration of judges, prosecutors and support staff from the Serbian judicial system into the Kosovo system, as part of the 15-point Brussels Agreement in 2013.

We urge both sides to further intensify efforts to implement the outstanding commitments set out in the Brussels Agreement by engaging constructively with each other in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation. In particular, we wish to see further progress on establishing the association of Serb-majority municipalities, on the energy and telecommunications sector and on the opening of the Mitrovica bridge.

Malaysia commends the ongoing efforts by the Kosovo Government to counter terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization. With regard to the latest developments during the reporting period, we welcome the Assembly of Kosovo's adoption of the law on preventing money-laundering and terrorist financing. With regard to the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, based in the Netherlands, we note that the court has not yet started functioning, as it is currently awaiting approval from the Netherlands Parliament.

Malaysia sees value in the call for a reduction in the frequency of the Council's meetings on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We concur with the view that the situation in Kosovo does not merit the current level of attention on the part of the Council. We are also concerned at the unproductive exchanges we often witness in the Council Chamber regarding the issue of Kosovo, which runs contrary to the necessary spirit of reconciliation, constructive engagement and normalization of relations.

Lastly, I join my other colleagues in reaffirming support for UNMIK, which continues to play a key role in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo. We also commend the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the important role of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Kosovo Force in ensuring peace, security and the rule of law in Kosovo.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7761

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7761st meeting

Thursday, 25 August 2016, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mrs. Adnin	(Malaysia)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Stehelin
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Thirty-second progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2016/706)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

Thirty-second progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2016/706)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Liberia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, and Mr. Joakim Vaverka, representative of the Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/706, which contains the thirty-second progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zarif.

Mr. Zarif: On 1 July, Liberia crossed a historic milestone and assumed full responsibility for its security. I applaud the Government and the people of Liberia for the successful completion of the security transition, in keeping with Security Council expectations. I commend the Liberian institutions and international partners for their leadership and commitment, which made reaching that milestone possible.

It is now up to the Liberians to demonstrate full ownership and responsibility for ensuring that the significant investment made in building the security institutions is not lost, that this achievement serves as a foundation for more a focused and determined continuation of efforts to strengthen their capacity and professionalism, and that the execution of the outstanding activities under the Government's plan for the transition of United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) remains on track.

Following the security transition, the overall situation in Liberia has remained calm. UNMIL has been closely monitoring the performance of the security institutions and adjusting its own engagement accordingly. That has also necessitated a review of the nature and form of the future support and cooperation between the Government, on the one hand, and UNMIL and other international partners, on the other, based on the clear leading role of the Liberian actors and continued, recalibrated support from international actors. Accordingly, consultations are ongoing between the Government and the United Nations and other stakeholders on the revised institutional framework for such cooperation.

In the meantime, UNMIL remains engaged with a view to consolidating the gains of the past years and advancing the development of the security and justice structures, frameworks and accountability mechanisms. That includes the training and mentoring of senior management, assistance in the drafting of legislation, policies and standard operating procedures, and support for the decentralization of security services. For example, with the technical training and logistical assistance of UNMIL, the Liberian National Police has opened five professional standards divisions in the counties to deconcentrate security services from Monrovia. UNMIL also provided support in developing draft administrative regulations to implement the Liberian National Police and immigration services acts, once signed into law.

Following the takeover of the security functions, the Government will need to redouble its focus and energy in order to sustain the progress and implement the remaining components of its transition plan. I am afraid, however, that will not be possible without continued international support. Challenges are still complex, and too many for Liberia to successfully tackle them by itself.

Over the recent period, Liberia has without doubt continued to achieve progress in security and peace consolidation. Some key legislation, such as the firearms and ammunition control act, was adopted and was enacted by the President. The Liberian National Police and immigration services acts were also adopted, but their signing into law has been delayed because of some continuing disagreements on a number of clauses. The Government has submitted to the legislature a draft uniform code of military justice. The draft code provides for a legal framework for jurisdictional

authority, dispensing justice and the right to due process within the armed forces of Liberia. I cannot overemphasize the importance of expeditious approval and enactment of those critical laws to sustain progress on the security transition.

Similarly, the domestic violence act, which the House of Representatives adopted in July, is yet to be concurred by the Senate. The current version of the act, regrettably, excludes the provisions that would have criminalized female genital mutilation. The women's legislative caucus continues to lack the majority's support in the legislature to outlaw that practice. In addition, the land authority and land rights acts, which are key elements of the reconciliation process, still remain to be adopted into law. In a positive development, the long-awaited draft of the local Government act, which is a key component of implementing the decentralization programme, reached the legislature in July.

Moreover, the overall political climate in Liberia continues to be impacted by the fallout from the Global Witness report issued in May, which implicated some senior officials in bribery. The allegations triggered strong public reactions and, among other consequences, led to a tense stand-off in the House of Representatives, where the majority of legislators continue to demand the resignation of the Speaker, who was one of the officials implicated in the report. The standoff has led to the boycott of regular House sessions by the opponents of the Speaker, who, in turn, has accused the President of plotting to remove him The standoff has in effect paralysed the normal functioning of the legislature and resulted in a separate parallel session held by the opposing camps in the presence of police on the capital routes. Outside the legislature, supporters have each camp have held demonstrations, which fortunately have not led to any serious security incident.

One the potentially serious consequences of the political infighting within the legislature is the delay in adopting the national budget for the 2016-2017 fiscal year, which includes the financing of the National Elections Commission and preparatory activities, including those related to the security for the October 2017 presidential and legislative elections. That should also be viewed against the background of a hardening socioeconomic environment due to the worsening economic outlook, which has prompted the Government to introduce austerity measures, revise downwards the current year's budget and introduce an additional 11 per cent decrease in the proposed budget for the next year.

Also, last week the Government announced the closure of several radio stations — Voice FM, Radio Lib 24 and Shata FM — for failing to comply with tax and licensing regulations. Opposition groups perceived that as a Government attempt to muzzle the independence of the media. One of the opposition parties, the All Liberia Coalition Party, accused the President and the Government of seeking an unfair advantage for the Unity Party — the ruling party — with a view to influencing the 2017 elections by silencing the independent media and seeking the removal of political opponents, in particular the Speaker of the House, for their critical views. UNMIL has actively encouraged the early resolution of those cases through equitable application of the relevant regulations.

The current unsatisfactory situation calls for ian urgent resolution in order to ensure the focus and resources on critical national priorities. That is becoming all the more pressing, as the legislature is expected to move into recess at the end of the month. The majority of House members, meeting in separate session, wrote to the President to request the postponement of the recess by one month.

In Liberia, as anywhere else in the world, the prevention of conflict can be only effective in the context of broader social, political and economic transformations and respect for the rule of law. I therefore remain concerned about the overall lack of progress on addressing the underlying causes of divisions and exclusion in Liberia. The failure to robustly pursue reconciliation, and delays in structural changes, such as land reform and decentralization, raise a red flag about the future prospects for peace and security in the country.

Tendencies towards division and exclusion were manifested again in the constitutional review process, in the form of Proposition No. 24, to render Liberia a Christian nation, and Proposition No. 6 ,to grant Liberian nationality based on race, which have caused considerable tension despite the President's rejection of those propositions, among others. I have been engaged with legislators and religious and traditional community representatives to defuse the tension and to encourage the importance of preserving and building on Liberia's diversity and adherence to international standards and norms.

Over the past months, in my meetings with State officials, I consistently urged constructive dialogue to

overcome disagreements and to refocus on substantive national issues. I also engaged with all political parties, media representatives, religious and traditional leaders and women's groups to discuss political, governance and security issues in the run-up to the 2017 elections. I also stressed the importance of meaningful political discourse, national unity and the need for all political actors to adhere to electoral laws and regulations. I urged the political parties to demonstrate leadership and commitment to peaceful campaigning, robust civic education and promoting equitable women's representation in the political decision-making processes.

All parties I met with expressed a strong desire for the peaceful conduct of the elections and recognized their responsibility in that regard. Their main concerns related to electoral transparency and potential for fraud, the use of Government assets for political party campaigning and the capacity of the Liberia National Police to ensure security. The Government has also taken steps to engage the political parties on the conduct of the elections. Earlier this month, the Minister of Justice invited the leaders of all political parties to discuss their role and responsibility in ensuring peaceful and credible elections. I will continue to encourage stronger engagement between the Government and other political actors to ensure a peaceful environment in Liberia, particularly during the electoral period.

As the successes of the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Liberia is leading to adjustments in our presence, and as the country is preparing for its forthcoming important political transition, many Liberians are expressing concern about the prospects of UNMIL's withdrawal and potential lack of United Nations support during the elections. There is consensus among national actors that the next elections will be a critical test for Liberia's stability, democracy and development. Therefore, both Liberia and the international community must not lose sight of the still arduous path towards sustainable peace in the country and the region, which will require long-term robust engagement by all concerned, particularly by the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Zarif for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Vaverka.

Mr. Vaverka: I thank you, Madam President, for the invitation to brief the Security Council on behalf the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). I will present the main focus of the Commission's work over the past couple of months, as well as our upcoming priorities for the fall of 2016.

Let me first take this opportunity to congratulate the Liberian Government on the successful resumption of security responsibilities on 30 June. An important milestone was reached this summer, and I would also like to commend the peacekeeping mission in Liberia, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), for its continued support provided during the transition.

In May, the Government of Liberia and the Peacebuilding Commission launched the revised statement of mutual commitments on peacebuilding in Liberia. It encapsulates the priority actions to be undertaken by the Government and the PBC, respectively, over the next two years. I feel confident that the statement of mutual commitments provides a robust basis for our work in support of peacebuilding efforts during a crucial period of transition for Liberia.

In the statement of mutual commitments, the Commission commits to continuing to provide support in the areas of promoting national reconciliation, security-sector development and strengthening the rule of law. I was pleased to note that the statement of mutual commitments was consistently referred to by Liberian officials during the recent visit to Liberia by the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Macharia Kamau of Kenya. It signalled to us a true sense of shared ownership and genuine interest in rolling out the commitments without delay.

In addition to the three areas that I have just mentioned, the PBC will follow up on conversations with national interlocutors regarding good governance, employment-generation, equal treatment of ethnic and religious groups, as well as the need to build trust and confidence between the security sector and citizens. The PBC also came away from the visit with a renewed commitment to forge stronger collaboration with the international financial institutions. Allow me to describe two areas to which the Commission will devote special attention over the coming months.

First of all, we will pay particular attention to preparations for the upcoming presidential and legislative elections in 2017. That will include engaging with national stakeholders, such as the National Elections Commission and the Governance Commission, in supporting efforts by the Government to ensure that the elections are conducted successfully and contribute to further democratic consolidation.

By addressing critical factors early, the PBC will be able, we hope, to support preventive measures, ranging from ensuring that efficient and quick mechanisms for dispute-resolution are in place to supporting regular channels for dialogue between the security forces and the public. In addition, the PBC will emphasize the importance of the participation of women, youth and civil society throughout the electoral process.

Secondly, the Commission will pay close attention to reconciliation. As noted in the report (S/2016/706) of the Secretary-General, there have been delays in advancing national reconciliation. We know that, in order to ensure a prosperous and stable Liberia in the years to come, it will be important to continue strengthening the social fabric and social cohesion. The Liberian Government has described reconciliation as a multidimensional process of overcoming social, political and religious cleavages, healing the physical and psychological wounds from the civil war and confronting and addressing historical and structural wrongs. The process cuts to the core of addressing the root causes of the conflict, and we remain committed to helping the Liberian authorities in that pursuit.

Later this fall, important decisions will be taken by the Security Council regarding the future United Nations presence in Liberia. In preparation for those deliberations, and in fulfilment of our advisory mandate, the Peacebuilding Commission looks forward to providing succinct and targeted advice on the longer-term peacebuilding needs and priorities. The Chair of the Liberia configuration will be travelling to Liberia early this fall to consult with the Government, national stakeholders and international actors.

In the statement of mutual commitments, the PBC committed to convening a dedicated multi-stakeholder forum on Liberia to discuss peacebuilding priorities for that purpose. It is our hope that such advice will complement the input received by the Council from other United Nations system entities, and in the end contribute to helping the United Nations and the international community in planning strategically and comprehensively for a smooth and successful transition.

In conclusion, let me reiterate what we have stated before. There is no excuse for either the United Nations system or the international community to provide peacebuilding support based on a fragmented approach. As UNMIL continues to draw down, we have a responsibility to sustain international attention on Liberia during and beyond the transition period, in terms of mobilizing both financial support and political accompaniment. The resolutions on peacebuilding adopted this spring provide clear guidance and strong impetus in that regard. The PBC looks forward to continuing its close collaboration with the Security Council in supporting Liberia on its path towards further consolidation of peace over the coming years.

The President: I thank Mr. Vaverka for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Liberia.

Mr. Brown (Liberia): On behalf of my grateful President and my nation, permit me to thank the Security Council for its support for Liberia's ongoing transformation. The assistance in the maintenance of peace and security provided by the Council through the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has been pivotal to Liberia's stability and progress, as well as to the security and stability of the West Africa subregion. We urge the Council to continue its close attention and support for Liberia as we strive to consolidate our cherished peace.

On 1 July, the Liberian Government was proud to formally resume full security responsibilities for our country. Scarred by a protracted war and seared by a long history of mistrust, it can be understood why some Liberians have not been as enthusiastic and optimistic as others about the security transition. However, together we will continue to work for a future of peace, security and shared prosperity, which we know will ultimately rest in our own hands.

We thank Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing and for his continued commitment and engagement throughout this period. Similarly, we thank the representative of the Peacebuilding Commission for the briefing delivered on behalf of the Commission. The Liberian Government appreciates the continued engagement of the Commission, remains committed to the statement of mutual commitments on peacebuilding in Liberia and urges international support for its successful implementation.

The Liberian Government also wishes to reassure the Council and the broader international community of its renewed commitment to taking every measure necessary to safeguard its peace, security and stability. We are keenly aware of the invaluable linkages that we share in that regard with our subregion, and

will therefore continue to act to ensure the security and stability of our neighbours. We embrace those responsibilities with unrelenting dedication.

That is why, although the forecasted growth in our economy has been largely weakened by the devastation resulting from Ebola and the precipitous decline in the prices of our main exports, we have continued to prioritize and provide, within the limits of our means, support to the relevant security institutions, challenging them to work together with the various communities in ensuring the continuing peace and security of the country.

To that end, the Liberia National Police and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization have continued, among other security measures, to recruit, train and deploy in many parts of the country. The judicial system is being reformed so as to improve access and public confidence and is also being extended to other parts of the country.

As we move ahead on rebuilding our nation — grateful, as always, for the support of our partners — we know that the resolve of the Government and the resilience of the Liberian people are indispensable to our ability to continue along our chosen path of consolidating peace. The Government has continued to demonstrate its political will, and the Liberian people continue to be highly motivated in that regard.

However, the current economic downturn has had the effect of undermining our ability to fully implement some of the programmes that could further advance our efforts towards achieving those objectives. They include accelerating the pace of the security-sector reforms as well as advancing programmes of reconciliation, decentralization, youth employment and local Government reforms. In response to the dire economic constraints, we have continued to adopt a number of austerity measures, while intensifying our fight against corruption so as to curb waste and abuse, ensure transparency and accountability and identify and reallocate our meagre resources so that we can continue the reforms and implement the needed programmes.

In October 2017, Liberia will conduct legislative and presidential elections. A successful election — one that is seen to be free, fair and credible by Liberians and by the international community — will be critical to consolidating Liberia's peace and its democratic transformation. The Liberian Government understands the significance of those elections and is determined to deliver a process and an outcome that are inclusive, participatory, credible, free and fair. We also urge the Council to support those critical undertakings.

Currently, there are 23 registered political parties, each of which is a member of the Inter-Party Consultative Committee, a growing forum of political parties committed to working with the National Elections Commission and other relevant stakeholders to continuously explore avenues of cooperation and problem-solving in furtherance of maintaining a conducive and peaceful atmosphere before, during and after the elections.

Meanwhile, a speedy resolution can be expected to the ongoing impasse in the Lower House of the legislature, largely brought about by the indictment of the Speaker of the House on charges of corruption, so that much-needed legislative focus and attention can be returned to the passage of a number of crucially enabling pieces of legislation affecting the elections and our overall peace consolidation efforts. Two of them include the possibility of a referendum on proposed changes to the Constitution, as well as a redefinition of land ownership and its associated rights, which will ensure, for the first time for indigenous families and communities, their right to the lands on which they have always lived — a right that extends beyond those of squatters.

Today, growing pains notwithstanding, Liberia is safe and stable. The country is progressively changing. From a past of war, we are working for peace; from fear, we are experiencing freedom; and from hopelessness, we are becoming hopeful. Difficult as it often is, we are finding the strength to come to terms with, and are committed to working to avoid, the tragedies of our dark past. We are determined to embrace the promise of a brighter future of togetherness.

Let there be no doubt: we are grappling with numerous anxieties and complexities, so that we can deepen a culture of democratic governance and change. That is made even more challenging by strains on available human and institutional capacities. Yet we are hopeful, increasingly and reassuringly at peace with ourselves and with our neighbours, unwavering in our determination and blessed with a resilient spirit to rise even when we were predicted to fall.

In obvious recognition of Liberia's rising, for the first time since the establishment of our subregional

organization, the Economic Community of West African States recently honoured the Government and the people of Liberia with the current chairmanship of its Authority of Heads of States and Governments. The Mano River Union has also conferred its current chairmanship upon our nation. We do not take those responsibilities lightly.

And yes, we stand in need of the Council's understanding and support, as well as the understanding and support of our international partners, especially as we strive to recreate our society into one that is freer, more just, more equitable, more tolerant, more accountable and more democratic — an emerging society that respects differences in gender, religion, tribe and political association, and yet provides opportunities to all without discrimination. We have, no doubt, a long road to travel. But, as a people, we are determined to get there.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7762

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7762nd meeting

Monday, 29 August 2016, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ibrahim	(Malaysia)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Elshandawily
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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16-27200 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Mladenov, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Jerusalem.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: With no prospect in sight for resuming negotiations, developments on the ground in Israel and Palestine continue to undermine an already precarious situation. Illegal settlement construction advances, Gaza remains beyond the control of the legitimate Palestinian Authority and the political leadership on both sides continues to shy away from the steps that are necessary for peace. That is the reality that continues to erode trust in the prospect for a two-State solution, the constituency for which is dwindling both in Israel and Palestine.

Although the past month has been relatively calm in terms of the frequency and intensity of violence in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory, a number of security-related incidents continued to cause concern. First, there was the apparent extrajudicial execution by members of the Palestinian security forces in Nablus on 23 August of a man, while in custody. He was suspected of orchestrating the killing of two security personnel earlier in the week. I welcome the announcement by Prime Minister Hamdallah of an investigation and call for a thorough, independent and transparent process, in line with international standards, in order to bring to justice the perpetrators of that crime.

On 21 August, militants in Gaza fired two rockets, one of which landed in a residential area of Sderot, causing no injuries. Israel responded by directing some 60 missiles and shells at 30 suspected military installations in Gaza. Once again, I reiterate that such rocket attacks and the response they elicit risk lives of both Palestinians and Israelis and do not serve the cause of peace.

On 26 August, a Palestinian man, who was reportedly under psychiatric care, was killed by members of the Israeli security forces. A preliminary investigation established that he was unarmed and did not pose a threat. I call upon Israel to ensure accountability and take all the necessary measures protect against the unjustified use of force.

It is against such a backdrop that preparations are advancing for the 8 October Palestinian local council elections. In a positive development, on 25 July, political parties signed an electoral code of conduct, to which all parties and candidates must adhere. The elections are expected to be the first simultaneous polls in the West Bank and Gaza since 2006.

Conducting the local elections in line with established international standards can contribute to advancing Palestinian reconciliation. The lack of unity, however, or any attempt to influence the outcome of the elections, including through intimidation, threats, violence or coercion, risks widening divisions and undermining the Palestinian national cause. In that respect, the recent decision by Fatah to bring the party together — a decision welcomed by Jordan, Egypt and the region — is an important step towards laying the groundwork for national reconciliation and unity.

Turning briefly to Gaza, three days ago we marked the two-year anniversary of the ceasefire to the last Gaza conflict. While progress has been made on rebuilding from the physical damage, sadly we are miles away from repairing the physical and psychological damage of the conflict. While Gaza remains locked away from the rest of the world, in the grip of militants and dependent upon aid and humanitarian assistance, the status quo will prevail. We need a radical overhaul of how we deal with the problems of Gaza.

Until the closures are lifted, the militant build-up has ceased and Gaza is back under the control of the legitimate Palestinian authorities, international funding and an uninterrupted flow of aid are a lifeline to over 1 million Palestinians in the Strip, who are struggling to survive within a dire humanitarian situation. In that context, I commend the Government of Palestine for enabling a much-needed humanitarian payment to over 20,000 unpaid civilian employees in Gaza,

made possible by the generous donation from the State of Qatar.

Separately, however, I am very concerned about the recent Israeli indictments of two aid workers accused of diverting funds and/or material to Hamas. Those are very serious and deeply troubling accusations, which must be investigated throughly and quickly and proved in a court of law. I welcome the commitment of the United Nations Development Programme and World Vision International to uphold the highest standards of accountability. It is important that the international community continue to enforce its policy of zero-tolerance for any wrongdoing and assures partners that robust measures are in place to ensure that aid goes to those for whom it is intended.

It has been nearly two months since the Middle East Quartet outlined clearly the threats to the two-State solution and offered practical recommendations to enable an eventual return to meaningful negotiations to end the occupation that began in 1967. Its recommendations, however, continue to be ignored, including by way of a surge in Israeli settlement-related announcements and continuing demolitions. Let me focus briefly on the expanding Israeli footprint in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which Russia, the European Union, the United States and the Secretary-General — all part of the Quartet — have clearly condemned.

We heard that settlement construction was not an impediment to a two-State solution — that "a few houses" were not a problem for peace. Let me ask in return: How will advancing the construction of over 1,700 housing units bring the parties closer to negotiated peace, uphold the two-State solution, create hope for the Palestinian people or bring security to Israelis? Since 1 July, Israel has advanced plans for over 1,000 housing units in occupied East Jerusalem — in Pisgat Ze'ev, Ramot, Har Homa and Gilo — as well as 735 units in Ma'ale Adumim and other locations in the West Bank. It has published tenders, some new, for 323 units in East Jerusalem settlements and reissued tenders for 42 units in Kiryat Arba, near Hebron, for which it also allocated over $13 million of new funding.

It is undertaking a new land survey to identify potential "State land" in the sensitive E-2 area. That step could enable the establishment of a new settlement on the outskirts of Bethlehem, further restricting that city's development and contributing to the dismemberment of the West Bank. It is also reportedly examining plans for new housing units for 100 Israelis on a portion of a military compound in Hebron that it has allocated for that purpose.

Israel advanced the so-called retroactive "legalization" of the Horesh Yaron and Rechelim outposts and put forward a potentially precedent-setting proposal to relocate the illegal outpost of Amona — which is slated by Israel's High Court of Justice for dismantling by the end of the year — onto nearby "absentee land".

All of those plans would essentially create new illegal settlements, and I call on Israel to cease and reverse those decisions. Let me be clear: no legal acrobatics can change the fact that all outposts — whether "legalized" under Israeli law or not, whether located on State land, absentee land or private land — just like all settlements in Area C and East Jerusalem, remain illegal under international law. It is difficult to read in those actions a genuine intention to work towards a viable two-State solution. This appears to reinforce a policy, carried out over decades, that has enabled over half a million Israelis to settle in territory that was occupied militarily in 1967.

The Quartet highlighted that Palestinians living in Area C and East Jerusalem were also disproportionately denied Israeli building permits. The past two months have seen an increase in the enforcement of non-punitive demolition orders against Palestinian structures in East Jerusalem, with 43 structures demolished, affecting more than 340 people. According to our colleagues in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in Area C in August alone, over 91 structures across 26 communities were demolished for the lack of Israeli building permits, displacing 125 people and affecting the livelihoods of over 2,100.

The Bedouins in Area C are particularly vulnerable. Some communities, such as the herders in Susiya and those in the controversial E-1 area around East Jerusalem, are particularly at risk, especially as settlement expansion plans move forward. Repeated rounds of demolitions of homes or livelihoods and restrictions on basic services are part of an environment that pressures those communities to move. Susiya, for example, is built on private Palestinian land in the southern West Bank. It is sandwiched between a settlement and an outpost. For years, planning schemes submitted by the residents to the Israeli authorities have been repeatedly

rejected, while the neighbouring settlement has been granted a generous planning scheme, and the nearby illegal outpost is connected to water and electricity networks. The demolition of that community would set a dangerous precedent for displacement and fuel the perception that Israel aims at a de facto annexation of Area C.

I note a new plan for the occupied West Bank, announced recently, promoting differential treatment to areas of the occupied West Bank from which perpetrators or suspected perpetrators of attacks against Israelis originate. While measures that generate economic opportunities for some Palestinians are helpful, they cannot come at the cost of what may amount to collective punishment for others, or undermine the legitimate Palestinian institutions and aspirations for ending the occupation.

Turning briefly to the Golan, the situation remains volatile and continues to undermine the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Fighting between the Syrian armed forces and armed groups in the areas of separation and limitation continue, with several incidents across the ceasefire line reported.

I take this opportunity to also draw attention to a nearly $100 million shortfall in the core budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). That funding gap affects UNRWA's key services for vulnerable Palestine refugees throughout the region and compounds regional instability. It must be addressed with the utmost urgency.

In conclusion, let me say that, more than 37 years ago, the Security Council determined that Israeli settlements in occupied territory had no legal validity and were an obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. That determination was true in 1979, and it is equally true, and even more urgent a concern, today. For years, we have been managing this conflict while the occupation has continued, Palestinians have been dispossessed and a one-State reality has been establishing itself on the ground. It is time for all of us — the leaders on both sides, with support from the region and the international community — to end the conflict on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and in a manner that meets the legitimate national aspirations of both peoples. Both sides should work to reverse the negative trajectory, to build trust and to restore hope that a negotiated two-State solution is not just a political slogan, but a reality that can be achieved through negotiations within our lifetime.

The President: I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7763

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7763rd meeting

Tuesday, 30 August 2016, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ibrahim	(Malaysia)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Ilnytskyi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Toro-Carnevali

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 3 August 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/681)

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16-27339 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 3 August 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/681)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Israel, Italy and Lebanon to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/744, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Angola, Egypt, France, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/681, which contains the text of a letter dated 3 August 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2305 (2016).

The meeting rose at 10.10 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7764

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7764th meeting

Tuesday, 30 August 2016, 10.10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ibrahim	(Malaysia)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Ilnytskyi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Toro-Carnevali

Agenda

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (S/2016/675)

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress made with regard to the stabilization of and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau (S/2016/720)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-27351 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (S/2016/675)

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress made with regard to stabilization and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau (S/2016/720)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Guinea-Bissau and Timor-Leste to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Modibo Touré, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, and His Excellency Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Brazil.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/675, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau.

I also wish to draw members attention to document S/2016/720, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made with regard to stabilization and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Modibo Touré, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, His Excellency Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Brazil, and His Excellency Mr. Luis Bermúdez, Deputy Permanent Representative of Uruguay and representative of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012), concerning Guinea-Bissau.

I now give the floor to Mr. Touré.

Mr. Touré (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak before the Security Council to present the report (S/2016/675) of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS). Today's meeting marks the second since the Security Council visited Bissau. As if there were a need to, that shows the particular and sustained attention that the Council accords to Guinea-Bissau.

As I address the Council, ongoing consultations are being pursued in order to break the deadlock prevailing in the People's National Assembly. The Assembly has yet to consider the Government's programme, although it has been in place for nearly three months. The normal legislative process, which should lead to the convening of a plenary session to discuss the programme, appears to be paralysed. Since its first unsuccessful meeting, on 28 July, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, an organ that is designed to prepare, inter alia, the agenda of the plenary session, has been unable to meet owing to the decision of the majority party, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC), to suspend its participation in those efforts. Among the reasons that the PAIGC has given for that is the arrest of a member of Parliament with parliamentary immunity and the need to clarify the status of members of Parliament who were expelled by the party in January.

Faced by this impasse, the President of the National Assembly launched a mediation initiative between the parliamentary groups of the two main political parties, namely the PAIGC and the Party for Social Renewal (PRS). On 16 August, the President of the Assembly invited the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and the United Nations to a meeting during which he shared the results of this initiative, his analysis of the situation and his proposal to end the crisis. He asked the organizations to convey his proposal.

The next day, representatives of those organizations and I met with President José Mário Vaz to discuss the opportunity of a dialogue that would be carried out with our support. The President of the welcomed the initiative

and assured us of his willingness to explore solutions that could help resolve the crisis. Subsequently, we conducted a series of consultations with all the political parties represented in Parliament, the Prime Minister, the Supreme Court, the group of 15 expelled PAIGC members of the Assembly, as well as civil society and religious and traditional leaders. The consultations sought to gather the views of national stakeholders on the current situation and explore solutions for a way out of the crisis.

Other steps have also been taken, which include compiling of a list of 57 signatures of members of Parliament, including those of the PRS, that was sent to the Speaker of the National Assembly on 22 August, to convoke a plenary session. Since 26 August, the PAIGC and PRS have started negotiations to reach consensus in order to end the political deadlock. We strongly welcome that initiative and count on the sense of responsibility of the leaders of both parties as well as that of the entire political class of Guinea-Bissau for a definitive way out of the crisis in the very near future. It is important to underscore that, in the absence of a programme bearing the imprimatur of those elected by the people, accompanied by a corresponding budget, it will be difficult for the Government to undertake essential reforms for the sustainable return to institutional stability and implement policies and strategies to boost inclusive economic growth and address the real problems of Guinea-Bissau, namely, combating poverty and improving the living conditions of the people.

(*spoke in English*)

As part of the efforts of UNIOGBIS to assist in resolving the political crisis, I have continued to engage with multiple stakeholders in furtherance of the Secretary-General's good offices, including through meetings with regional Heads of State to advocate for support to Guinea-Bissau. I also convened several meetings with ECOWAS, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the European Union, as well as with key bilateral partners and national stakeholders, to promote the coordination of mediation efforts to break the political gridlock. I have been greatly encouraged by the commitment of all international partners to remain engaged in the country.

I am pleased to note the collective commitment by national stakeholders to engage in dialogue. The ongoing political impasse can, and must be, resolved. The parties to the crisis should be urged to honour their commitment to make the necessary sacrifices and concessions needed to end the parliamentary stand-off and put the Government machinery back on track. In that regard, I call upon the political leaders to put aside partisan considerations and focus on the national interests, as well as the welfare of the suffering population.

I am also pleased that the military continues to demonstrate restraint and neutrality in the face of the political stalemate. Many of them look forward to receiving pledged support for their demobilization and socioeconomic reintegration. For the sake of the stability of Guinea-Bissau, we must not fail them.

While addressing the current impasse remains the immediate priority, breaking the stalemate should also provide an opportunity for the political actors of Guinea-Bissau to reflect on ways of ending the recurrent cycle of institutional paralysis and ensuring sustainable stability. That can be achieved only through genuine and inclusive dialogue among the citizenry. Such an exercise has the potential to stabilize institutions and pave the way for tackling related priorities, including justice and reconciliation, the reform of the defence and security sectors and the fight against drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime.

In that connection, it is heartening to note that preparations for the National Conference are on course. Earlier this month, a delegation of the Organizing Commission for the National Conference, with funding from the Peacebuilding Fund, visited Timor-Leste to learn from that country's experiences in national dialogue and transitional justice processes. That experience will no doubt feed into the impending dialogue.

As we all know, there is no development without stability. The path to stability in Guinea-Bissau will require a pragmatic and integrated approach. That means that, in addition to the current focus on achieving stability from the top down, we should also invest energy and resources to foster stability from the bottom up. To that end, I call upon the donor community to consider allocating more resources to the social sectors, including health and education, and to programmes that empower women and create opportunities for our youth.

The people of Guinea-Bissau are resilient, peaceful, decent and hard-working. All they aspire to is to improve their daily lot and overcome the harshness of poverty. Those aspirations should not be held back or constrained

by political contingencies. While we continue to work with the Bissau-Guineans for the return to full stability, we should design resilient policies and programmes for their benefit that would be impervious to fragility and instability. The people of Guinea-Bissau are counting on the support of the Security Council and that of the international community at large.

The President: I thank Mr. Touré for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. De Aguiar Patriota.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota: At the outset of this briefing, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to address the Security Council today in my capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

I am grateful for, and welcome the comprehensive briefing delivered by, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, Mr. Modibo Touré, as it is most timely under the current circumstances. In addition to the information presented by Mr. Touré in his briefing, I wish to add a few elements on the basis of the discussions held in the PBC on 22 August, which we hope will be helpful for the Council's deliberations.

Guinea-Bissau has come a long ways since the coup d'état in 2012. The country has made important strides in regaining its footing towards democratization, and the progress achieved is now acknowledged by many, even amidst the situation in which the country remains trapped in a political impasse. Despite an undeniably fragile stability, national actors seem to understand that they must position themselves within the context of respect for the rule of law, the country's international legal obligations and the Constitution. We were reminded last week by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman, when he briefed the Guinea-Bissau configuration on his recent trip to Bissau, that the authorities in that country today no longer faced the dilemma they confronted in the wake of the 2012 coup d'état, when there was disagreement on who would legitimately represent the country's Government during that year's session of the General Assembly.

In equal measure, regional and international observers who were then divided on matters related to Guinea-Bissau are now aligned in supporting a strong development and stability agenda for the country. The consensus that today characterizes the oversight of the ongoing challenges in Guinea-Bissau, both in the PBC and in the Security Council, is something worth highlighting.

At the same time, the precarious political situation in Guinea-Bissau remains a source of concern to many in West Africa and beyond. In a region that has seen great progress in consolidating peace and stability through democratic means, Guinea-Bissau remains a weak link. I wish to use this opportunity to make a strong plea for collective efforts to help the national authorities of Guinea-Bissau find solutions to their governance problems. Options must be discussed as a matter of urgency. The longer the crisis is allowed to last, the more the progress achieved thus far risks being undermined, and perhaps even erased. We have well-founded worries that it would become harder to steer the country back on track if viable solutions are not found in the short term to render the governance of the country truly effective.

The PBC supports an inclusive and fruitful political dialogue, as stated in the press statement issued on 26 August by the PBC Guinea-Bissau country-specific configuration. That would be a positive step in paving the way for longer-term policies that the country requires, including a possible constitutional review. The PBC could assist those and other efforts — for example, by mobilizing constitutional experts who may be able to provide adequate advice, as required and in full respect for national sovereignty. In order to tackle longer-term issues, it would be up to the Bissau-Guineans to show wisdom and creativity to make their political constitutional model workable and adapted to their own specificities.

The PBC believes that every effort must be made by international partners to support the continuation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB). We cannot afford to send the wrong signals regarding the importance of maintaining a safe and stable environment as remaining challenges are tackled. In that connection, I wish to acknowledge the role of the European Union's financial support to ensure the renewal of the mandate of ECOMIB in June of this year.

In conclusion, the PBC believes that the lack of genuine political will to overcome current impasses is preventing the enactment of Government measures that would lead to concrete peace dividends. The

PBC urges the political parties and, through them, all legislative actors to work together and urgently resume a constructive and cooperative dialogue in order to approve the Government's programme and the State budget. Without a national road map for policy and a budget to sustain a functional State, the country will be ill-positioned to receive support from the international community, despite the professed intentions to provide support. The PBC believes that the international community, including the Council, must strongly encourage regional diplomatic efforts, such as those agreed to at the forty-nineth ordinary meeting of the ECOWAS Heads of State gathering in Dakar in June. I look forward to an early dispatch of a high-level mission composed of the Presidents of Senegal, Sierra Leone and Guinea. President Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, as acting Chair of ECOWAS, has a leadership role to play in that regard. The PBC also encourages consultations aimed at organizing a meeting of the International Contact Group for Guinea-Bissau.

Finally, the PBC will continue impressing upon all actors the importance of upholding their commitments made at the Brussels donor round table in March 2015. That applies equally to the respective pledges from national and international stakeholders. A clear commitment to place the national interests above other agendas will be conducive to stronger partnerships between the Government and its international supporters. We therefore urge the national authorities to seek a path towards sustainable, constructive governance where dissent is channelled without holding hostage the country's institutional, social and economic development perspectives.

The President: I thank Mr. De Aguiar Patriota for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Bermúdez.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to address the members of the Security Council in my capacity as representative of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012), concerning Guinea-Bissau. I would like to sum up the main aspects of the debate on the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/720) on the progress made with regard to the stabilization and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau, held during the informal consultations of the Committee on 19 August.

This year's assessment was less encouraging than the one set out in the previous report (S/2015/619) of the Secretary-General, especially with regard to the political situation that has paralysed State institutions and led to the frustration felt among a number of international donors. The crisis impeded the Government from implementing significant reforms and weakened its ability to deal with issues such as crime, illicit trafficking and terrorism. Moreover, the situation also dissuaded international donors from fulfilling their pledges. However, the economic growth forecast for the country for 2016, the renewal of the mandate of the Economic Community of African States (ECOWAS) Mission in Guinea-Bissau and the uninterrupted efforts by regional and international actors were all positive factors that could contribute to putting an end to the crisis.

According to the report of the Secretary-General, United Nations sanctions continued to have a deterrent effect on the military, which did not become directly involved in the political life of the country. Nevertheless, the risk of intevervention on the part of military forces could increase if the political crisis were to persist, reforms of the relevant sectors were not undertaken and, in particular, if the precarious budgetary situation were to prevent the payment of the soldiers' salaries.

With regard to the sanctions imposed on 11 individuals, it was reported that at least four of them had travelled abroad — supposedly to receive medical treatment. Those trips, which took place in breach of the prohibition on travel, could have been justified on humanitarian grounds, which is one of the possible reasons for exemption that the Committee can grant. However, no such application was made.

The deep-rooted causes of Guinea-Bissau's problems continued to exist, and therefore the possibility of the country slipping back into instability and unconstitutional crisis could not be excluded. In that regard, the Secretary-General reiterated his recommendations of last year to maintain the sanctions regime and its criteria, send a firm message that sanctions would be imposed on all elements causing unrest, and, finally, adopt additional measures with an increase in designations. He also recommended considering the establishment of a group of experts and defining the parameters for the lifting of sanctions. The report also recommended that the Committee should consider the possibility of charging its Chair with visiting Guinea-Bissau and revisiting the issue of

the sanctions list, including updating it. A number of the members of the Committee felt that the assessment presented in the report was balanced and sound; however, some members expressed their deep concern about the deterioration in the political and econmic situation in Guinea-Bissau.

With regard to sanctions, some Committee members made positive comments in that the measures continued to be useful and effective. They also supported the continuation of the sanctions regime. Members also highlighted that sanctions were a means and not an end onto themselves.Therefore, they had to be adapted to the situation on the ground. Some members expressed concern about an expansive interpretation of the criteria for inclusion on the sanctions list and questioned its relevance.

With regard to the Secretary-General's recommendation of considering the possibility of establishing a group of experts, some members indicated that experts could help gather timely and useful information for the Committee's use, especially with regard to process for listing and delisting from the sanctions list. The Committee had already taken steps with regard to the potential revision of the sanctions list, including approving the sending of a letter to the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau requesting proof concerning the death of Mr. Sanha Clussé, who apparently died in April. Some members also urged that Guinea-Bissau be sent the message that the Council remained vigilant and was closely following the development of the situation in the country.

In addressing the questions and observations of members, Mr. Kelvin Ong, Chief of the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch, who presented the report of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Antero Lopes, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Political Affairs in the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), who joined the meeting from Bissau via video tele-conference, stated that the existing sanctions regime and criteria had already had a positive impact on the situation in Guinea-Bissau and that continuing the regime was already a strong message to the military to remain neutral. Moreover, the people of Guinea-Bissau viewed the continuation of the sanctions regime as a sign of interest and commitment on the part of the Council. With regard to the possible revision of the sanctions regime, they clarified that the criteria were sufficiently broad to include all possible elements of disruption to the constitutional order, independent of their affiliation. In that regard, a group of experts could provide timely, accurate and useful information and could help to increase awareness about Guinea-Bissau's problems.

With regard to terrorism, the Secretary-General reported that there were indications of recent terrorist activities involving recruitment by persons associated with Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in Western Africa, and that there was a risk for an increase in terrorist activities in Guinea-Bissau. Nevertheless, for the time being, there was not sufficient information to provide a clear picture of the situation.

There was also a recognition of the positive role played to date by the armed forces and its leaders. Nevertheless, concern was expressed about the fact that the military was gaining increasing popularity among the population owing to a visible lack of ability by the current Government to provide basic services, pay salaries and establish conditions for the international community to meet its pledges of financial contributions.

Lastly, with regard to mediation efforts by UNIOGBIS, it was confirmed that the Secretary-General's Special Representative was fully determined to meet with all interested national and international stakeholders to consider the situation, including with a view to facilitate the high-level presidential visit proposed by ECOWAS.

The President: I thank Mr. Bermúdez for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Guinea-Bissau.

Ms. Lopes D'Alva (Guinea-Bissau): I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting my delegation to the Security Council table and for giving me floor. I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August 2016.

On behalf of Ambassador João Soares da Gama, Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations, and on behalf of my entire delegation, allow me to thank Mr. Modibo Touré, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau, for the briefing just presented and for his steadfast diligence on the political situation in my country since his arrival in Bissau. His efforts to bring all the relevant parties together for a common understanding as to the way forward in resolving the present crisis are very much appreciated. We also extend our gratitude to His

Excellency Ambassador António de Aguiar Patriota, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations and Chair of Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for his briefing and for his personal engagement, through PBC, for the cause of peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. I would like also to thank the Deputy Permanent Representative of Uruguay, in his capacity as the representative of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012), for his briefing on the status of the sanctions regime in Guinea-Bissau. And I would like to thank the representative of Timor-Leste, who will speak in his capacity as Chair of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), for his statement and for all the support by the CPLP to Guinea-Bissau.

After the very comprehensive report and everything that has been said about the situation in Guinea-Bissau, I do not have much to add, but to request all the members of the Security Council to continue their support to our country and its people. The latest developments in the country in the past few days show that, finally, the main actors from the two major parties are engaged in an open dialogue towards reaching the needed consensus to restore the normal functioning of the national Parliament, which is an essential step to passing the national budget and to move the country ahead.

The latest visit by the Council to Guinea-Bissau, the visit of Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and the recent diplomatic efforts led by the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau and other international organizations in the country have served to reassure Bissau-Guineans that they are not forgotten and that the international community remains engaged in helping us to bring peace and stability to our country.

Our people are aware that the major work towards peace and stability remains the primary responsibility of Bissau-Guineans. However, as the political crises persists and the socioeconomic situation in the country can no longer be sustained, the Council's presence, input and concrete actions vis-à-vis the people are urgently needed. We know that the full realization of the results and the pledges made at the Brussels round table conference on Guinea-Bissau, on which Bissau Guineans count so much, counting, are still pending — perhaps waiting for an enabling political environment in the country — but the suffering population cannot wait.

The renewal of the mandate of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission in Guinea-Bissau for one more year, with the support of our partners to ECOWAS, is very much appreciated. However, we are very concerned about the news that after this year the Mission will be leaving Bissau. We hope that by then the country will find a way to walk by itself in terms of securing peace and that the military, which at the moment is out of the political scene in the country, will remain the same. Their attitude so far has been very professional, and we commend them for it. The international community's financial support to alleviate the immediate socioeconomic difficulties on the population is very important and much-needed at this moment.

In conclusion, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to our immediate neighbours, specially Senegal, which is a member of the Council, for their engagement through ECOWAS, as well as all partners and friends of Guinea-Bissau, for the continued support and assistance for peace and stability in our country.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Timor-Leste.

Mr. Da Costa Freitas (Timor-Leste): I would like to express our congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Security Council for the month of August, as well as to thank you for convening this meeting. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Modibo Ibrahim Touré, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau, for his briefing and for his efforts in assisting the country's authorities to resolve the crisis.

I am honoured to address the Security Council on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), whose members include Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Principe and my own country, Timor-Leste.

We welcome the two latest reports (S/2016/675 and S/2016/720) of the Secretary-General on Guinea-Bissau, whose recommendations we fully endorse.

The member States of the CPLP remain deeply concerned about the continuing political impasse and the overall situation in Guinea-Bissau. Of particular concern are the impacts on the provision of basic services to the population and the suspension of crucial reforms. The strains are already being felt, particularly

in the health and education systems and in the economic deprivation of Bissau-Guineans. We are deeply concerned that this could escalate into social tensions. We call on all the parties to engage in constructive dialogue and to create the conditions for the approval of the Government programme and a national budget, thereby exhibiting the necessary commitment towards long-term development in the country. That would lead to the much-needed lifting of the suspension on international cooperation aid.

The CPLP commends the concerted action of the international community and, in that regard, welcomes the decision by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Summit to renew the mandate of its Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB). Its role in contributing to stability in Guinea-Bissau cannot be overstated. In that regard, we congratulate the European Union on its decision to provide funding assistance to ECOWAS. We are deeply concerned about the detrimental effects of an eventual withdrawal of ECOMIB before the security situation is guaranteed, and we urge international partners to consider ways by which we can continue to support peace and development in Guinea-Bissau.

We very much appreciate the briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman on his recent visit to Guinea-Bissau, given during a meeting of the Guinea-Bissau country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. For that and for his continued efforts, we also thank His Excellency Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota, Chair of the configuration.

We reiterate our call to all national stakeholders, namely, the organs of sovereignty, the political parties and civil society, to commit to constructive and inclusive dialogue, with respect for the Constitution, democratic principles and the rule of law. Statesmanship is required to resolve the political impasse and to move towards greater political stability and socioeconomic development, as well as for the protection and promotion of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all Bissau-Guineans.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7765

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7765th meeting
Wednesday, 31 August 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ibrahim	(Malaysia)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-27472 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed (*spoke in Arabic*): I am grateful for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the latest developments in the pursuit for peace in Yemen.

The past month has been tragic for Yemen. The departure from Kuwait without an agreement has betrayed the expectations of millions of Yemenis, who had hoped that the talks would bring an end to the conflict and open the way for Yemen's return to a peaceful and orderly transition. The end of the Kuwait talks was followed by a severe breakdown in the cessation of hostilities and a dangerous escalation in military activities. Extensive military confrontations have been on-going in recent weeks in Sana'a, Taiz, Al-Jawf, Shabwa and Mareb governorates, as well as along the border between Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The clashes have involved the use of artillery, airstrikes and ballistic missiles and have resulted in dozens of casualties, extensive destruction and renewed displacement.

As has been the case throughout the conflict, numerous violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law have accompanied the fighting. On 17 August, the Secretary-General noted with concern the continued escalation of hostilities in Yemen and along the border area, including airstrikes and ground fighting. He also condemned in the strongest terms the attack on a rural hospital in Hajjah.

According to human rights organizations, at least 60 members of the Baha'i community in Sana'a have been detained without charge, including six children. Further arrests were reportedly carried out on 16 August. That shows a worrying disrespect for the human rights of minority groups, and I echo the call from human rights groups for the immediate release of those still in detention. I also call on all the parties to fulfil their obligations and release all prisoners and detainees. I furthermore call upon all groups to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law to protect civilian lives and infrastructure.

The military escalation will continue to provide opportunities for the spread of terrorist groups. Al-Qaida and the Islamic State continue to wreak havoc in significant parts of Yemen. For example, a suicide attack in Aden killed or injured dozens of Yemenis on 29 August. That attack was strongly condemned. The Yemeni army's increasing ability to confront extremist groups, as evidenced by the recent detention of suspected militants from Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and the carrying out of military operations in Zinjibar and Hadramout, is encouraging. However, the absence of the State in many parts of Yemen, in addition to the chaos created by war, will continue to facilitate the expansion of those terrorist groups, which represents a real threat to the region.

The Kuwait talks concluded after more than three months of difficult negotiations. I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the Amir of Kuwait for hosting the talks and for his efforts to encourage the Yemeni parties to conclude an agreement. The talks in Kuwait did not yield an agreement, but they were not without important results. During the talks, the architecture of a road map emerged, which we will expand upon in the coming weeks. Before departing Kuwait, I agreed with both parties to continue consultations separately and to reconvene direct talks at a later stage.

Delaying progress towards an agreement is particularly dangerous considering the grave deterioration in the economic situation. Of particular concern are delays in the payment of salaries in many parts of the country. Without external support, the lack of revenue and the shortage of liquidity could make it impossible for salaries to be paid in the coming months. There are reports of civil servants unable to collect their wages in Aden and other parts of the south. The stoppage of salary payments risks driving many more Yemenis into destitution and vastly exacerbating the humanitarian situation. It will be necessary to find

practical solutions that will allow Yemen to overcome the liquidity crisis and ensure continued payments of salaries without discrimination everywhere in the country.

From a humanitarian perspective, the escalation in fighting has led to tragic and unnecessary civilian deaths, casualties and a worsening of humanitarian suffering. The number of internally displaced persons has risen to over 3 million. Food prices are on average at least 60 per cent above pre-crisis levels, while income levels have dropped dramatically. Despite the growing levels of need, it has become increasingly difficult for humanitarian agencies to access many areas. The health-care system and other basic social services are struggling to cope with an increased workload and fewer resources. The cessation of Yemenia flights to and from Sana'a has blocked access to Yemenis seeking urgent medical treatment abroad, thereby removing a much needed humanitarian lifeline. In that context, I welcome United States Secretary of State Kerry's announcement of an additional $189 million to the Yemen humanitarian response plan, which remains funded at only 28 per cent.

Over the past two weeks, I have conducted intensive meetings in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. In Riyadh, I met with President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour and Prime Minister Ahmed Obaid Mubarek Bin-Dagher, who reaffirmed their willingness to continue consultations on the basis of the principles agreed upon in Kuwait. During those visits, I also held extensive discussions with the Foreign Ministers and senior officials of Yemen, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the Russian Federation, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States. The discussions reaffirmed the strong international and regional support for a settlement of the conflict in Yemen and a commitment to help overcome the desperate economic and humanitarian challenges facing the country.

During my latest visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I briefed a joint meeting of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States that had been called specifically to discuss how to overcome obstacles in the peace process. That meeting was followed by a discussion with the Foreign Ministers of the member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), who emphasized their full support of the United Nations efforts in Yemen. In both encounters, there was strong support for a return to the cessation of hostilities, which began on 10 April. There was also consensus on the need for a full and comprehensive political solution involving clearly sequenced political and security measures and firmly grounded in the GCC initiative and its implementation mechanism, resolution 2216 (2015) and the National Dialogue Conference outcomes.

That proposed agreement would define a path for the rapid formation of a Government of national unity to be formed immediately following the withdrawal and handover of heavy weapons in Sana'a and some other vital areas. Implementation would be overseen by military and security committees made up of senior military professionals acceptable to both parties, who would assume responsibility for the security of the population, critical infrastructure and State institutions. The agreement would also provide for the immediate restoration of the functioning of State institutions, free from interference by revolutionary committees or other bodies created during the conflict.

The effective resumption of talks will be possible only if all parties maintain their commitment to a negotiated settlement and refrain from unilateral actions. I am extremely concerned by the announcement by Ansar Allah and former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, of the formation of a supreme political council with broad administrative, security, economic and legislative powers. Those actions breach the commitments provided by both Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress to engage constructively in the peace process, as requested by the Security Council, and creates a new potential impediment to make progress towards an agreement. Unilateral actions of that sort will only complicate Yemen's path to peace and delay the end of military violence. We cannot effectively negotiate new political arrangements while unilateral steps are being taken that are inconsistent with a future comprehensive agreement. I therefore urge both parties to refrain from taking any additional unilateral steps that could undermine attempts to reach a peaceful settlement.

On the basis of international and regional support, I will resume consultations with the Government of Yemen, Ansar Allah and the General People's Congress in order to take advantage of this new initiative to and build on the progress made in Kuwait.

In order to accelerate progress along the path to renewed talks, the resumption of the cessation of

hostilities will be critical. Further military violence will not ease the way to a negotiated settlement. As we resume consultations, my priority will be to gain a recommitment from all sides to the cessation of hostilities. That should start with the full deployment of the De-escalation and Coordination Committee in Dharan Al-Janub. As specified in the terms and conditions agreed upon before the start of the Kuwait consultations, the cessation of hostilities should include a full end to all military activities by land, sea or air, using any kind of weapon. It should also include a complete de-escalation along Yemen's border with Saudi Arabia.

The recommitment to the cessation of hostilities will spare Yemen further loss of life, allow for an increase in the flow of humanitarian assistance and generate much-needed confidence for the negotiation of a comprehensive and peaceful solution. Only a negotiated political settlement can put an end to the devastation and injustice brought about by this horrific war. The Yemeni people have suffered for far too long, and understandably demand that Yemen's leaders demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of Yemen and the Yemeni people, and that they restore peace and security to their country without further delay.

Peace in Yemen is a priority, and the safety and security of all Yemenis should not be taken for granted. The United Nations has dedicated all of its political and administrative expertise to help Yemenis, but that will not be sufficient if the decision makers do not uphold their responsibilities and prioritize the interest of the population. The United Nations has not, and will not, fail Yemen. Yemen's leaders must not fail the Yemeni people — all the Yemeni people — in the south and in the morth.

The President: I thank Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alyemany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express my sincere thanks to you, Sir, Ambassador Ramlan Bin Ibrahim, Permant Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, for your leadership of the Security Council for the month of August and for this opportunity to address the Council. I would also like to express my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed, for the efforts that continue to be made since the end the of the latest round of talks in Kuwait in the ongoing efforts to reach a definitive peace and end the tragic war launched by the Houthi and pro-Saleh militias against our people in September 2014.

We had great hopes that today's briefing would be held against the backdrop of progress along the path to peace. We had hoped that the putchists would be aware of the tragedy of the situation in Yemen and that they would have agreed to the paper presented by the Special Envoy as the successful result of ongoing negotiations of over 100 days between the Government delegation and the putchists in neighbouring country of Kuwait. However, the pernicious Houthi and pro-Saleh militias have continued to wage war, kill innocent victims, expel civilians and blow up homes and houses of worship. They have continued to attack areas bordering Saudi Arabia, unleashing death and fuelling the terrorist gangs in Iraq through the regional proxy, Hizbullah. Those gangs took the State hostage back in September 2014. Without any form of legitimacy or legal basis, they have continued to destroy the homeland through their sectarian endeavour to gain legitimacy in promoting pro-Saleh factions and Houthis as representatives of the Yemeni people — a people who has fully rejected them and the family fiefdom of Saleh.

The Yemeni Government has unconditionally renewed its firm commitment to choose the path of peace in order to end the suffering of the valiant Yemeni people, who continue to face the consequences of the unjust war launched by the Houthi and pro-Saleh militias in all areas of Yemen. The Government believes that peace is the only way to rid the country of those criminal gangs and warlords. Since the very beginning, the Yemeni Government has responded positively to the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for Yemen. The Government of Yemen continues to make the painful and difficult concessions for peace in the country, whereas the putchists have remained staunchly opposed to any peaceful solution. With regard to the people of Yemen's present and future fate, they have insisted on the status quo and the rule of gangs and militias.

While we stress the importance of the terms of reference in resolving the crisis in Yemen, the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the results of National Dialogue Consultations and the relevant Security Council resolutions on Yemen, namely resolution 2216 (2015), the putchists have

insisted on circumventing them —particularly in their latest unilateral statement, which buries those terms of reference because they do not serve their plans to lay hand on the State. The regional community as well as the international community have stressed that the solution to the Yemeni crisis cannot be a repetition of the Hizbullah model in Yemen and that the presence of statelets cannot be accepted within Yemen.

When the Kuwait talks collapsed following the rejection of the putchists to deal in a positive manner with the efforts of the Special Envoy and States encouraging the political process in Yemen, international efforts continued and resulted in ideas that emerged from the ministerial meetings of the Quartet in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia as well as other efforts on the part of the GCC, the United States and the United Kingdom, in cooperation and coordination with Russia and the participation of the Special Envoy. The Yemeni Government was among the first to embrace those ideas, whereas the putchists rejected them.

Those who are working towards peace have taken different stances with regard to dealing with militias whose slogan promotes death and who trade in death and destruction, introduce children to the theatre of war, are driven by sectarian expansionist ideas and call for increased international terrorism. The war could be ended today if the Yemeni people were allowed to overcome those criminal gangs, which have transformed their daily lives into a nightmare, and if Yemeni political forces were able to implement the results of the National Dialogue to rejoin humankind and implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Meanwhile, the Houthi and pro-Saleh gangs are destroying the little that we were able to build in Yemen with the assistance of Powers in the region and the world. At a time when the putchists continue raise the flags of death, we in the Yemeni Government continue our efforts to renew the hope of returning to a normal life in the areas in which the Government is present and of a democratic and federal State of Yemen in which everyone is a winner, living in peace and security with all our neighbours in the Gulf and the Arabian peninsula.

The people of Yemen are suffering because of the war launched by the Houthi and pro-Saleh militias on the Yemeni provinces. That suffering has reached inconceivable levels in connection with public health, education and various services. On a daily basis, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are being committed. In response, the Government of Yemen is working around the clock to lessen the destructive consequences of the chaos created by the war launched by the militias against our people. Yemen's National Independent Commission has taken up the grave violations of human rights committed against our nation and people. We in the Government of Yemen call upon the international community and the friends of Yemen to stand with our people to confront this intransigeance and rejection on the part of the putchists, thereby enabling the Government to assume its responsibilities for rebuilding Yemen.

In conclusion, the Government of Yemen sincerely appreciates the tireless efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for Yemen. We also appreciate the efforts of the Council and the Ambassadors of the group of 18, which are aimed at achieving peace and stability in Yemen. We renew our deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and all other members of the Arab coalition in contributing to regain legitimacy in Yemen. The Government of Yemen appeals to all members of the Security Council to continue their unified efforts, which have accompanied the crisis in Yemen since its onset in 2011. Because of the unified stand of the Security Council, much has been achieved in Yemen, which can be added to the outstanding record of the United Nations in the settlement of disputes throughout the world.

We call on the Security Council to take a firm stand vis-à-vis the putchists, who have shown their rejection of all the commitments required to achieve peace and continue daily to obstruct the resumption of the peace process led by the United Nations.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7766

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7766th meeting
Wednesday, 31 August 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ibrahim	(Malaysia)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): Let me begin by congratulating Malaysia and your team, Mr. President, for conducting the Security Council's work so well during this past month. We want to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting and for providing a very useful focus for our discussions, including on conflict-prevention and on the Council's working methods. In our view, the Council's capability to prevent conflict is inherently linked to its methods of work and to the way Council members relate with each other and with the Secretariat. I want to make a couple of points on two related subjects, namely, the importance of timely information from the Secretariat and some observations on confidentiality.

For the Council to act early, it is important that it be aware of the potential threats and security. We need to be well informed of developments where the Council has a mandate to respond. In situations where there are conflicting narratives of developments, the Secretariat has a particularly important role in providing an authoritative account. We saw that last week with the briefing on Western Sahara, which was very useful in providing a clear account of developments on a contentious and sensitive issue. In situations that are developing rapidly, it is vital that all Council members be brought up to speed on the situation on the ground quickly. Otherwise, elected members can be at a significant disadvantage in such matters.

Council members also need to be informed of broader emerging issues and potential crises where a political impasse risks boiling over, or where regional issues threaten to aggravate a fragile peace. We are thankful for the efforts that the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs has been making in that regard. As Council members, we need to continue to apply political energy and creativity on this issue — one that we are going to take up next month in our presidency of the Council.

The question of the timeliness of information also relates to the reverse issue of confidentiality. During our 20 months on the Council, we have championed the importance of transparency in the Council's work as an important element of our responsibility to the membership that elected us, and of our own legitimacy, as the Security Council acts on their behalf. But confidentiality is an important counterpoint to transparency. The Secretariat cannot provide frank assessments if they are immediately relayed outside the Consultations Room. The members of the Council cannot have meaningful political-level exchanges when sensitive discussions are repeated verbatim. Ideas cannot be tested and explored and instead become limited to set-piece interventions, safe for public consumption, not the frank exchange that is necessary when dealing with complex and novel issues. In our view, we need to do much better in ensuring that confidentiality is respected as much as appropriate. If the Consultations Room is not private, inevitably discussions will go elsewhere, which is not in anyone's interests.

We look forward to hearing further from the new Council members on their reflections. I know that I can count on members' support in the month ahead.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I congratulate you, Mr. President — Ramlan — and your team for everything you have done in the successful month of August. I think we have done a lot under your leadership. We have reacted to a lot going on in the world, and so I am glad that you have found time for this wrap-up session. I will keep my remarks short and focused on a couple of issues, as, you Sir, suggested in the helpful concept note.

First, with regard to conflict prevention and, secondly, the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, the link between the two issues is transparency. I therefore very much agree with what Gerard just said about that and, indeed, with his other point about the flow of information from the Secretariat. Just to take one example of conflict prevention where we have failed as a Council, I would mentin Syria. I thought we had a good meeting yesterday on chemical weapons in Syria. But when we look at the five-year history of the conflict, the Council has failed to have any real impact on politically resolving the conflict, and still less in preventing it in the first

place. A lot of the effort to try to do that has to take place, inevitably, in private, but there are risks when we do too much in private. Again, I very much agree with what Gerard was saying about confidentiality about things that need to remain confidential — but equally, I think some things can be more transparent. I think we would benefit from more confidentiality on some issues and more transparency on others. Trying to hide the scale and nature of the Syrian conflict from the wider world is not something that benefits conflict prevention or the search for peace.

If we take the situation in Aleppo as the most extreme example, where the suffering of the Syrian people is at its most extreme, it is a telling example of a reality that, however bad we think it might be, can always get worse. Our job here is to try to shine a spotlight publicly on the situation there in order to try to bring pressure to bear to encourage those responsible for the situation to reform their ways and to bring peace where there is currently war and tragedy and suffering. Shedding light on issues on our agenda is therefore extremely important, and is the flip side of the coin of being confidential where we need to be confidential.

I am not talking about shedding light on an issue in order to shock or horrify people, or to still less to score political points. What is mean is that by focusing on a deteriorating situation, we should show the world that we are watching and that there is at least something that we can do to try to prevent a bad situation from getting even worse. If we do all of that in private, then we are giving a free pass to those who are trying to prosecute the savage, mindless war — by which I mean the Syrian regime against its own people. Transparency is therefore an important part of our toolkit when it comes to trying to do a better job at conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

The second, completely different, issue that I want to focus on where there is the same tension between confidentiality and transparency is the selection process for the next Secretary-General. We have now held three straw polls. Unsurprisingly, the full results were available on Twitter within a few minutes of the polling. I think that we are getting the worst of both worlds. What we should be aiming for is confidentiality as it relates to the candidates. Anything that we talk to them about in the privacy of the Security Council should remain absolutely confidential.

But then there are some other issues, including the results, where I feel as though we could afford to be much more transparent without damaging the candidates' dignity in any way. I would favour having another look at what we do with the results of the straw polls, while trying to be more transparent and building up the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly in the meantime. To refuse to go in that direction reminds me of the English King Canute, who tried to hold back the incoming tide. We are not going to do so; we will just look foolish by trying to keep those results private. I would be in favour of more confidentiality on some issues but much more transparency on others in order to maximize the impact of our work.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President — Ramlan — and your entire team for your work this month, as well as to congratulate you on your presidency, which concludes today with success. I also appreciate the concept note that you have circulated in order to guide the discussion in this formal wrap-up session. Spain is in favour of a sharper focus in the debate on the issues in the wrap-up sessions, and we underscore our desire for transparency and for participation by all Member States. I will focus on two areas that I think were the most important in work of the Security Council this month. The first has to do with non-proliferation issues, and the second with the situation in Syria.

On the issue of non-proliferation, the month of August has brought us both bad and good news. On the subject of the bad news, we must once again lament the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continued to ignore Security Council resolutions. The developing momentum in the situation in the Korean peninsula is particularly concerning, given that ballistic missile launches are taking place more often and with greater success in reaching nearby coastal areas of neighbouring States. This month, for the first time, we have seen the successful launch of a ballistic missile from a submarine, and the first one to fall within the exclusive economic zone of another State. Despite that disturbing situation, we also have to welcome the fact that the Security Council has regained its unity when it comes to the matter. On Friday, 26 August, we unanimously condemned the launching of missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, while also

reiterating our determination to adopt new, meaningful measures pursuant to resolution 2270 (2016).

Under the heading of good news, Spain is grateful to the Malaysian presidency for convening the open debate (see S/PV.7758) on non-proliferation, which took place on 23 August. The presence of the Secretary-General and of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the participation of 61 delegations and international organizations all served to highlight the great interest that exists in the issue. During that debate, we noted, on the one hand, that there existed shared concern about new threats — in particular given the link between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and the risks that have arisen due to technological and scientific advances. On the other hand, however, there was also a desire to strengthen preventive mechanisms and instruments, such as resolution 1540 (2004), so as to adapt them to the new context. The recent report of the Joint Implementation Mechanism (JIM) shows that the risks that resolution 1540 (2004) tries to prevent are not illusory or amorphous. On the contrary, they are very real risks, such as have already materialized in the case of Syria. The terrible facts in the JIM report should to serve as a stimulus for us to bolster the non-proliferation regime within the scope of the United Nations.

On the second issue —Syria — the assessment necessarily has to be a negative one, both from the perspective of the evolution of the conflict as well as from the vantage point of the Security Council's response. We began the month of August with a threat that the distribution of assistance to Aleppo could be blocked because of the fighting and the closure of the Castello Road. Several Council meetings were held at which we had an opportunity to discuss the issue in depth — from the Arria Formula meeting on 8 August to the open briefing on 22 August (see S/PV.7757). However, we end the month in nearly the same situation, with the United Nations calling for a 48-hour humanitarian pause in order to enter the city, so far without success.

All of us are aware of the dialogue between the co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group. Spain is confident that the dialogue between the United States and the Russian Federation can contribute to renewing the cessation of hostilities — and even to opening the door to a new round of talks in Geneva, as has happened in the past. Nevertheless, the Security Council has a responsibility to support the work being done by the United Nations in Syria, in particular in the humanitarian area. That is why, in close contact with all of the members of the Council — especially Egypt and New Zealand — we will continue to follow developments in the situation very closely. I take this opportunity to congratulate New Zealand for the priority attention it intends to accord the issue in the programme of work for September.

Lastly, we are confident that the JIM report presented yesterday to the Council will allow us to ensure accountability with regard to the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We thank you once again, Mr. President, and we welcome New Zealand and assure it of our full support during its presidency, which begins tomorrow.

Mr. Xu Zhongsheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. We commend Malaysia's presidency during the month of August and its steady steering of the Council's work to a successful conclusion. With respect to the Council's work during the month, I would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, on South Sudan, the Council held several thorough briefings and adopted resolution 2304 (2016), which adjusted the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. The situation is grave and complex. The international community must make concerted efforts to assist all parties in the country to return to the track of a political settlement and to implement the peace agreement in order to achieve peace and stability as soon as possible. China supports the resolution of African problems by Africans themselves, using their own methods. We appreciate the efforts and good offices on the part of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU) and States of the region on the question of South Sudan. We support IGAD's leading role on the issue. It is our hope that the United Nations will establish political synergies with IGAD and the AU through communication and consultation to address the problem of South Sudan. We welcome the recent consultations held between the Chief of General Staff of the national forces of IGAD and the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan on the regional protection force. We hope that they will also fully heed the views of the Transitional Government of National Unity in reaching an agreement on the specifics concerning the force.

Secondly, on Syria, certain areas of the country have recently experienced an escalation of conflict. China is deeply concerned and believes that a political solution is the only way out in addressing the question of Syria. We support the efforts of the United States and Russia, as co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group, with a view to intensifying coordination. The international community should also take effective measures aimed at easing the humanitarian situation in the country, putting the ceasefire back on track and creating conditions conducive to a political settlement of the Syrian question. We welcome Russia's agreement on the United Nations initiative to call for weekly 48-hour humanitarian pauses in Aleppo. The international community should continue to support the leading role of the United Nations towards a political settlement of the Syrian question, including the work of Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, as well as urge the parties to resume the Geneva talks unconditionally. The parties in Syria should abandon the mindset of a military settlement to the Syrian question and commit themselves to dialogue and negotiation with a view to gradually finding a solution that is acceptable to all.

Thirdly, on counter-terrorism, on 30 August a terrorist suicide-bomber attacked the Chinese Embassy in Kyrgyzstan. China strongly condemns that serious terrorist attack. Terrorism is a common enemy of humankind. All forms of terrorism pose a threat to international peace and security. The international community should strengthen joint cooperation in order to adopt universal standards aimed at firmly countering any such activity, under any pretext or against any country. The United Nations and the Security Council should play the leading role in counter-terrorism activities, which should be guided by the Charter of the United Nations. The international community should step up effective coordination to establish a united front against terrorism and to ensure that terrorists have nowhere to hide. As an important member of the coalition against terrorism, China will continue actively participating in bilateral and multilateral cooperation against terrorism in order to contribute positively and constructively to the maintenance of international peace and security.

China also wishes New Zealand all the best during its presidency during the month of September.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt): On behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, we wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency and for a job well done during a very busy month with many achievements. We also look forward to the New Zealand presidency and to cooperating and supporting it in ensuring a successful outcome.

On behalf of the African members of the Council, I wish to highlight the following conclusions, with a focus on key messages emanating from the two open debates organized under the Malaysian presidency — namely, on children and armed conflict (see S/PV.7753) and on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (see S/PV.7758). Towards the end of the statement, I will share a few thoughts on working methods, as requested by you, Sir, in your very helpful concept paper.

The convening of the open debate on children and armed conflict was both timely and important, at a time when we are witnessing the plight of children as they suffer the scourge of war and armed conflict. We believe that the international community still lacks appropriate tools for effective preventive action. There are a number of messages we can draw from the debate that we would like to highlight, and on which we call for further action by the Council and its Working Group chaired by Malaysia.

First, children are the most vulnerable and the most affected by indiscriminate attacks during armed conflict, in particular attacks on densely populated areas — including schools, hospitals and medical facilities — by military forces and armed and terrorist groups. Such attacks represent criminal acts, and therefore call for measures to hold the perpetrators to account. We underscore the importance of resolution 2286 (2016), on medical care in armed conflict, as a policy framework for the prevention of such attacks in the future.

Secondly, concerning measures to protect children in post-conflict situations, there is a need to reach agreement on specific commitments related to child protection throughout peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes. Those should include requirements for the rapid release of children from armed forces and non-State armed groups.

Thirdly, the international community is called upon to review the recommendations of the Graça Machel report (see A/51/306), in particular those relating to displaced and refugee children, given the shortage of financial resources available to carry out the recommendations relating to host States in

particular. Moreover, much work remains to be done with regard to sexual exploitation and gender-based violence, as well as the effects of sanctions regimes on the health, nutrition, psychological rehabilitation and education of children in armed conflict. In addition, greater emphasis is required on social reintegration of children through psychological support, educational programmes and professional training.

Fourthly, the mandates of the mechanisms established to address the plight of children in armed conflict continue to focus on information gathering with regard to violations committed in hotbeds of tension and conflict. Their reports are only a means of monitoring, and fall short of providing the necessary practical and realistic means of protecting children — a task that falls under their mandate.

Fifthly, and finally, there is a need for a three-fold action plan: guaranteeing the protection of children, strengthening preventive measures, and ensuring accountability for perpetrators of war crimes.

The convening of the debate on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction highlighted that the world has become more complicated and dangerous in the light of the evolving security challenges, including the expansion of terrorist organizations worldwide. The fact that such organizations have had access and have been able to use chemical weapons in areas of the Middle East is alarming and calls for determined action. We can draw several conclusions from that debate, as well as further points of potential progress to be explored by the Council.

First, the international community currently faces emerging security threats arising from newly developed technologies, especially those with dual-use features, such as 3-D printing, the Dark Web, cyberwarfare, genetic editing, synthetic biology and unmanned aerial vehicles.

Secondly, within the framework of the comprehensive review of the status of implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), we have to focus on the further enhancement of cooperation and coordination with relevant international, regional and subregional organizations by prioritizing technical support and assistance, as well as the exchange of information, knowledge and expertise in that domain. Accordingly, technical assistance and capacity-building are vital for developing countries.

Thirdly, African States spare no effort, regionally and internationally, to contribute to the promotion of the implementation process of resolution 1540 (2004) and the subsequent resolution 1977 (2011). There is a need to strengthen the mechanism under the former in order to keep pace with the rapid developments at the political, technical, scientific and technological levels.

Fourthly, the three African members of the Security Council would like to reiterate that the sole, most effective path to prevent terrorism and to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction is the total elimination of those weapons in all regions of the world.

With regard to the working methods, the three African members of the Council stress the need for more action-oriented discussions and more transparency in the work of the Council. In that regard, they first invite Council members to continue strengthening their interaction with countries that are on the Council's agenda, as well as with countries of the region, by holding more frequent informal interactive dialogues, particularly before renewing the mandate of peace missions deployed by the Council, in order to allow more discussion on the political and operational aspects of the conflicts. The interactive dialogue held on Mali last month was a case in point and was very helpful.

Secondly, the three African members of the Council welcome the field visits made this year to several African countries, which provided the Council opportunities to interact with the main political stakeholders, such as national authorities, and with regional and international partners with respect to issues pertaining to efforts aimed at fostering peace processes in those countries.

Finally, the three African members of the Council would like to stress the importance of strengthening the Council's cooperation with the African Union Peace and Security Council. The annual consultations in that regard, as well as country-specific informal dialogues, such as the one about to happen later this week in Addis Ababa, on South Sudan and the question of financing peace operations authorized by the Security Council and launched by the African Union or regional organizations, are of vital importance.

Once again, I would like to thank you and congratulate you, Mr. President. We look forward to working with the next President, the Ambassador of New Zealand.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, we would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this session to review the work of the Security Council during the month of August. We would also like to congratulate you and your entire delegation for the outstanding work carried out this month. We are grateful for the concept note you prepared, Sir, to guide our discussion today.

Turning to your point, Mr. President, about potential areas of convergence between the Security Council and the General Assembly in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, we believe that, rather than viewing it as a matter of convergences, the Assembly and the Council could employ a division of labour based on the competencies enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Security Council is charged with addressing disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction from the perspective of the fight against terrorism, particularly as it relates to adopting measures to prevent non-State actors, including terrorist groups, from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt that the globalization of commercial, logistical and economic transactions has made the task of controlling proliferation more complex, and has made it easier for non-State actors and terrorists to take advantage of transnational criminal networks in their attempt to obtain weapons of mass destruction. It is also true that terrorism has expanded its violent methods and terrorists are more determined than ever to obtain weapons of mass destruction and to use them on civilians, as has occurred in Syria and Iraq.

In that connection, the Security Council plays a fundamental role through resolution 1540 (2004), and in fact has made strides in efforts to prevent, investigate and respond to the threats and risks linked to nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Resolution 1540 (2004) has made it possible for the international community to make headway in tackling the issue of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors. That has been accomplished, inter alia, by improving reports, bolstering or adopting new legislation, providing assistance, cooperating at the regional level and drawing up national plans of action. We are concerned that the Security Council is not yet ready to assert that the only way to avoid the destruction of the environment or of humankind by way of such weapons, especially nuclear weapons, is through their total elimination. That being the case, we believe that the Security Council, as an organ, finds itself constrained in spearheading the process of nuclear disarmament.

It falls to the General Assembly — whose very first resolution focused on disarmament — to work towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the negotiation and adoption of an internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissionable material, as well as a comprehensive treaty prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons, among others.

We also believe there to be another urgent, pending issue, namely, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In that connection, we urge Israel and other countries to unblock action on the issue and to take concrete steps towards signing an agreement to that effect.

The permanent members of the Security Council, as nuclear-weapon States, have a fundamental role to play in that process. Achieving a world free of nuclear weapons necessarily entails a broad discussion on all issues related to disarmament and international security, based on the principles of preserving the security of the individual parties and not allowing any State to gain an advantage over any other, always with a view to ensuring military stability without affecting security and without weapons of mass destruction. That discussion process should be open, broad and inclusive, as set out in the proposal for the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Turning to the second part of your concept note, Sir, in connection with lessons learned and possible ways to improve the future performance of the Security Council in terms of conflict prevention — including, for example, with regard to South Sudan, Syria and Western Sahara — we believe that a critical area that has been overlooked when in comes to conflict prevention in the Security Council is the mobilizing of resources for sustaining peace, which is essential for generating peace dividends, including creating jobs, providing public services, establishing solid political institutions and providing justice.

We believe that preventing conflicts requires more diplomacy and dialogue, and fewer threats and sanctions. There appears to be a tendency among some members of the Security Council to apply Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, instead of the

mechanisms aimed at preventing conflict as provided under Chapter VI of the Charter — in practice, turning to the various regional and subregional organizations around the world. Resolving conflicts is always a political undertaking, and there is therefore a need for political will to prevent and resolve them.

We also want to highlight the damage done to the Organization, and the world in general by, the double standards by which the Council often operates. We have spoken here about working methods, confidentiality and transparency, but I would like to talk about silence. There are issues that are subject to an absolutely untransparent silence on the part of the Council. When members of this organ work actively to prevent the dissemination of information about conflict situations in certain parts of the world, all members of the international community are kept in the dark about key aspects that ought to be addressed in order to prevent conflicts. That is the case in Palestine and Western Sahara, for instance, where silence and the untransparent manner in which those issues are addressed call into question the entire international security and peacekeeping apparatus that serves to underpin relations among States.

I would mention, for example, the incident on 11 August in the vicinity of Al-Guerguerat, where Moroccan military forces several times crossed the berm, in violation of the ceasefire agreement, into the Bir Gandouz sector, next to the first Sahrawi-controlled military region. We believe that such events do not receive adequate attention from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. By not being provided with timely information on such developments, it was not until 26 August that members of the Council were informed — in closed consultations requested by my country — about what had occurred. Such practices are inacceptable. For we cannot overlook, for the sake of political expediency, protracted conflict situations that have an impact on international peace and security.

Furthermore, the situation in the occupied territories of the State of Palestine has continued to worsen, without the Council being able to send a clear message demanding Israel to end its settlement policy — the consequence of its prolonged military occupation for nearly half a century. We have insisted that the Israeli occupation is the main cause of human rights and international humanitarian law violations in the occupied territories. More than five years have elapsed since the adoption of a Security Council resolution on the Palestinian question.

To conclude, we would like to mention the open debate (see S/PV.7753) on children and armed conflict, during which a considerable number of countries supported the agenda of the Security Council on the subject. It is necessary to highlight that the issues of accountability and protecting children in armed conflict must be addressed in a non-selective and impartial manner, while respecting the respective mandates of the mechanisms established to that end in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of United Nations, applicable international law and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

I reiterate our congratulations to you, Mr. President, and to your delegation for the outstanding way in which you have led the work of the Council during the month of August. Once again, we extend our hand in cooperation with New Zealand in what we are certain will be a successful piloting of the Council's business in the month of September.

Mr. Fesko (Ukraine): Please accept our sincere congratulations, Sir, on having successfully steered the Security Council's work during the month of August. We also would like to commend the highly professional work of the entire Malaysian delegation, which allowed the Council to conduct its daily business in an effective and efficient manner. We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Malaysia on its National Day of Independence, which falls on today's date. Because the Council's formal wrap-up sessions are not held regularly, which is regrettable in our opinion, we appreciate the holding of today's meeting.

At the outset of Malaysia's presidency, the Council held an open debate (see S/PV.7753) on the subject of children and armed conflict. The debate vividly demonstrated that, even though, on a fundamental level, United Nations States Members appreciate the gravity of the problem, they have different views and approaches on how to address the subject. Regardless of divergent views on some aspects of the issue, the crux of the matter is that, without eliminating conflicts, or at least reducing their intensity, children will continue to bear the brunt of suffering in war zones, and the international community will continue to grapple with the challenge of how to help affected children. In that regard, it is absolutely crucial that the Council redouble its efforts to prevent potential conflicts and contribute to the settlement of ongoing ones, thereby removing the core cause of threats to the lives and well-being of children and other vulnerable groups.

The other open debate (see S/PV.7758), on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), was also very pertinent to the current state of affairs on the world stage. The integrity of the global non-proliferation regime has been severely compromised by the irresponsible actions of some actors. In a world in which established norms and international instruments can be blatantly violated without accountability and where might makes right, it is particularly disturbing that some exploit existing gaps in the system and feel free to pursue WMD programmes of their own. In fact, in some cases, like that of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we are witnessing a worrying trend of complete disregard for international obligations and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Rogue non-State actors similarly are attempting to acquire WMDs, and the most recent conclusions of the Joint Investigative Mechanism on the use of mustard gas by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant looks almost banal in the current environment. It is anything but banal. The violations committed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must not be treated as a routine item on the Council's agenda, and law and order in the international arena must be upheld if global non-proliferation efforts are not to be wasted.

Another hallmark activity of the Council during the month of August was the selection process of the next Secretary-General. So far, we have held three straw polls. While the results of the polls are no secret to anyone even remotely interested in the subject, the Council as an organ persists in maintaining its old ways while rejecting any attempt to reform its work. In the light of the recent changes made to the process for the selection of the Secretary-General, characterized by the unprecedented openness and transparency introduced by the General Assembly, the Council's fascination with so-called "established practice' is truly incomprehensible. The steadfast refusal by some Council members to consider the possibility of formally making the results of the straw polls public does no good either to the Council or the candidates. As we all have learned, the results are leaked almost immediately, and the Council subsequently finds itself in a situation in which it is unable to provide transparency as to its work or to ensure confidentiality to the candidates. On that matter, I would like to underline that our delegation, together with many others, advocates for a more transparent process, including properly informing the general United Nations membership of the outcomes of the straw polls. The selection process is far from being over, and nothing bars the Council from introducing long-awaited changes in its work.

The Council is usually preoccupied with grave and somore issues. Against that background, the signing of a final peace agreement by the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia was a much welcome reprieve. We welcome the successful completion of efforts to end the 50-year-old conflict. We are ready to engage constructively in efforts to consider the Council's next steps to support the peace process in Colombia.

In conclusion, I once again congratulate you, Sir, on the successful completion of Malaysia's presidency, and I would like to convey a message of our full support to the incoming presidency of New Zealand in the difficult month of September.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation): We would like to thank you personally, Sir, and the delegation of Malaysia for effectively presiding over the Security Council in August. That always demands intensive efforts. Your presidency was characterized by a very busy agenda. We note the timeliness of holding a meeting (see S/PV.7758) on the issue of non-proliferation and resolution 1540 (2004) . As we all know, the global non-proliferation architecture is based on three components — the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The Russian Federation takes an active part in all of them.

Resolution 1540 (2004) provides another basis for non-proliferation efforts. It is a reliable shield against the eventuality of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-State actors. We are sure that the implementation of the resolution by all countries and in full is an urgent task facing the international community. Information that non-State actors have gained access to chemical weapons requires detailed investigation and a response from the Council. It is unacceptable that non-State actors be given any form of support allowing them access to weapons of mass destruction.

As always, the African cluster was at the centre of the Council's attention. On several occasions this past month, the Security Council discussed the situation in the Sudan and South Sudan. We abstained in the voting on resolution 2304 (2016). As is often the case in dealing with South Sudan, during the drafting stage the American sponsors of the resolution ignored the legitimate concerns of our and many other delegations

on important issues affecting the sovereignty of the host country, including the deployment of the Regional Protection Force and a possible arms embargo. The fact that the modalities of those forces require substantive fine-tuning is shown by the fact that there are ongoing discussions on that issue by delegations of South Sudan and key regional players. We welcome those discussions and hope that there will be a constructive exchange of information on a whole range of issues relating to the settlement of the South Sudan issue during the meeting scheduled for 5 September in Addis Ababa. That will be a meeting between members of the Security Council, representatives of the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development plus format.

It must be noted, unfortunately that some delegations periodically use their status as members of the Security Council to politicize issues for propaganda purposes in order to shed light on certain subjects, rather than make quiet, painstaking efforts to maintain international peace and security in the framework of the statutory powers of the Security Council. An illustration of that trend was the holding of an Arria Formula on 8 August on the situation in Aleppo. The holding of that event was announced just the day before, and the meeting itself was another propaganda show presenting tried and tested political standard fare. Its organizers were not guided by the goal of settling the Syrian problem, but rather sought to advance their own personal agendas, which was far more important to them.

We were also surprised at the Secretariat's organization of that meeting. There was a live broadcast of the meeting, although earlier — for example, with regard to the organization of the Arria Formula meeting on Palestine — representatives of the Secretariat made reference to established practice and said that a broadcast of such events was not possible. We were therefore very puzzled by the change in approach. We expect the Secretariat to provide a detailed explanation of the issues raised. We believe that the Security Council Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions should consider that problem when it prepares the updated version of presidential note S/2010/507. I would like to remind colleagues in the Council that Arria Formula meetings were conceived as informal, confidential meetings for frank exchanges of private views on issues covered by the Security Council's mandate. We cannot agree with the practice followed by members of the Council to abuse that format and use it for advertising their own private initiatives.

Turning to Syria, we must refer to the inhumane actions on the part of the Syrian radical opposition, which interrupted the United Nations humanitarian operation in Aleppo, which had already been prepared. After agreeing to allow convoys of trucks with humanitarian aid for the civilian population to go through, at the last minute those jihadist-oppositionists began to set obviously unacceptable and unrealistic preconditions. Such a clearly defiant step obviously reveals the true face of those pseudo-fighters for the Syrian people. They are not ashamed to exploit the difficult humanitarian situation so as to achieve their own destructive goals.

For our part, we will continue to work in a constructive manner and in cooperation with the United Nations in preparing the humanitarian operation in Aleppo along the lines of what we are already doing in that area. We also confirm our readiness to hold the 48-hour humanitarian pause so as to deliver aid to those areas that can be reached. However, we would like once again to remind Council members that the Russian side has responded promptly to the appropriate proposal from the United Nations and joined in the work to address the issues relating to the secure passage of convoys along the Castello Road and reach an agreement with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the modalities for humanitarian operations.

In conclusion, I would like to wish every success to the delegation of New Zealand, which will lead the Council in September. The month of September is usually a very busy one, and we want to assure our colleagues of our full support.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and your entire delegation for the excellent work carried out during the month of August. In addition, I also take this opportunity to wish New Zealand a successful presidency during the month of September and to assure it of our readiness to collaborate to ensure its success.

I would like to begin by thanking you, Sir, for convening this formal wrap-up session and for circulating the concept note yesterday. In line with that note, I promise that I will not exceed the 5-minute limit.

As my delegation has said on past occasions, this is a format that enables us to make a formal statement during the meeting, and it is also an opportunity for anyone who would like to hear our statement but is unable to attend to do so through our website, regardless of where they are. this is therefore an exercise in transparency, which I must highlight. My delegation has pointed out on more than one occasion that it would represent a step towards transparency if, whenever we have a format that includes a briefing followed by consultations, delegations could make their statements here in the Chamber. I must admit that, to some degree, we have already begun to do that in dealing with the Syrian humanitarian track. We must therefore highlight that as a notable development during August. However, we hope that in the near future that practice can also be extended to many other issues.

August was not a productive month when it comes to humanitarian issues. The situations in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan and other areas have been showing us that we have not yet been able to find the necessary solutions to alleviate the suffering of the people who are victims of armed conflicts. I would like to pause for a moment to reflect on what the Council was not able to do — or, rather, failed to do.

Although there is clear awareness in the Council of the serious humanitarian crises — or rather catastrophes — in Syria and Yemen, we were unable to agree on the text of a press release following consultations on Yemen on 3 August, nor were we able to do so on Syria on 9 and 22 August. It is hard to imagine what civilians in a besieged area in Syria might think if one of us were to try to explain to them the reasons why we were unable to issue a statement condemning the situation, or what a child who has nothing to eat and no medicines to treat their ailments might think of us; or if that child cannot go to school because of the conflict, or was recruited by the terrorists or suffered sexual violence at their hands.

Unfortunately, the month of August once again saw a blockage in the Security Council's ability in the face of issues for which it bears inescapable responsibility.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency during the month of August, during which you presided over two open debates (see S/PV.7753 and S/PV.7758) and two straw polls, two straw polls. The straw polls showed that the Council's procedures, which you, Sir, very effectively managed, indeed work. The best proof of that lies in the fact that the Council was able methodically to move forward in a unified manner on the very demanding work of selecting the individual who will lead the Organization as of next year. At the appropriate time, the Council willl have to make its recommendation to the General Assembly, pursuant to Article 97 of the Charter of the United Nations, in such a way as to enable the man or woman who will become the next Secretary-General to prepare for that difficult task.

I would also like to say a few words on Syria, which calls for the Security Council to assume its responsibilities. The consultations that took place yesterday following the submission of the report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism served to bring us face-to-face with our responsibilities. That is not vague wording, but a reality. The use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime and by Da'esh, as the report clearly established, constitutes a step backward that we cannot allow to go without a response, or there will be serious consequences. Those who committed those crimes — who are now known to us — must face up to their weighty responsibility.

The month of August also saw the Council closely following the very worrying humanitarian situation in Syria. The Security Council held an important and disturbing Arria Formula meeting on 8 August. I hope that it will contribute to raising greater awareness about the disaster in Aleppo. I would like to thank all the delegations that took part, even if some of them felt that they were implicated. The Council moved to act on the situation in Aleppo owing to the humanitarian crisis. In the consultations that took place on 9 August Mr. Stephen O'Brien and Mr. Staffan de Mistura expressed their deep concern and called upon the two co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group to find a solution during their discussions in Geneva. On 22 August (see S/PV.7756), Mr. O'Brien spoke here of his great concern about the failure to deliver humanitarian aid to all the besieged towns in the country. He also expressed his hope that that would be the last time he had to ask for humanitarian access, which is an obligation guaranteed under international humanitarian law. Unfortunately, we are very far from that. On this issue too, the Council must show itself to be up to its responsibilities.

I just mentioned the chemical weapons in Syria. In fact, the issue of non-proliferation issue was also

at the centre of the Council's work this month. You, Mr. President, convened an open debate (see S/PV.7758) on the isue. However, the Council also dealt with the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Fortunately, we regained our unity this month, following a further, irresponsible provocation by the authorities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Council condemned in no uncertain terms the ballistic missile tests undertaken by Pyongyang, which constitute a direct threat to its neighbours. I recall that a missile landed this past month in the territorial waters of Japan, a Member of the United Nations and of the Security Council. It was also a threat to the non-proliferation regime, on which our collective security is based. We must reinforce our message and specify new listings so that the authorities in Pyongyang have no misunderstanding as to our determination to prevent them from continuing to advance their illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

By way of conclusion, on the issue of South Sudan, the month of August included follow-up by the Council with regard to the worsening of the situation in that country since July with the outbreak of violence in Juba. It was important for the Council to remind everyone of the importance it gives to the protection of civilians. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan is operating in a particularly difficult environment and is encountering a number of obstacles in implementing its mandate. It was therefore important for the Council to reiterate its full support for the Mission. The Council also reminded the parties that they should recommit themselves to peace. Along with its regional partners, such as Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union, the Council must continue to assume its responsibilities, as it will do in the coming days by undertaking a visit to South Sudan. It is high time for the Council to finally put in place an essential arms embargo for that beleaguered country — a common sense decision that we should have taken a long time ago.

I should like to conclude by mentioning Lebanon and pointing out that we adopted a strong presidential statement at the end of July (S/PRST/2016/10) to deplore the vacancy in the presidency. During the consultations with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on 24 August, we pointed to the situation in southern Lebanon 10 years after the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006). We reiterated our collective support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in carrying out its mandate to safeguard the cessation of hostilities. On 30 August, we unanimously adopted resolution 2305 (2016) to extend the mission's mandate for another year. We welcome the Council's support for UNIFIL and for the stability of southern Lebanon — in a region, the Middle East, that does not deserve another crisis.

The month of August has therefore been one of great substance, and I would like to thank you, Sir, for your work during your presidency. I also welcome the presidency of New Zealand for the month of September, which will be equally busy.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I congratulate you, Mr. President, for guiding the Security Council through the month of August, which turned out to be quite a full month of developments, good and bad — but mostly bad, unfortunately. Today, I would like to focus on just a few points, as suggested in the concept note. I would like to concentrate on North Korea and South Sudan. In doing so, I would like to stress the importance of the unity, action and effectiveness of the Security Council.

On North Korea, my delegation stresses the importance of the united message sent by the Council in the press statement (SC/12494) to strongly condemn the submarine-launched ballistic missile launched on 23 August and the series of preceding launches by North Korea, which were in flagrant violation of obligations under Security Council resolutions. Those launches contribute to North Korea's development of nuclear-weapon-delivery systems and increase tensions in the region and beyond. The launches, including one impacting in Japans air defence identification zone, pose an increasing threat to Japan's national security.

We welcome the fact that the Council demonstrated unity in condemning acts of provocation by North Korea through its press statement on 26 August, but that is not enough. We must not let those violent acts pass without consequence. In the light of the seriousness of the situation, the Council should consider taking further measures in response to North Korea's clear and continuing threats to international peace and security, bearing in mind the determination that we expressed in resolution 2270 (2016) to take further significant measures in the event of a further nuclear test or launch. I would also like to repeat the call of my Government to urge all Member States to redouble their efforts to fully implement and enforce the relevant

Council resolutions, including by submitting national implementation reports.

On South Sudan, Japan has contributed to nation-building in that country through various forms of assistance and by contributing troops to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Japan supports the strengthening of UNMISS through resolution 2304 (2016). In addition to the full implementation by the parties of the agreement on a resolution to the conflict, the establishment of a regional protection force under the basic principles of peacekeeping, including the consent of the parties, represents the most effective response to address the situation on the ground. The upcoming Council visit to South Sudan will be an important opportunity for the Council to convey a clear message to the Transitional Government of National Unity.

Before concluding, I would like to stress the importance that Japan attaches to improving the working methods of the Council. In that context, allow me to briefly touch upon the new and inclusive process for selecting the chairs of the subsidiary bodies of the Council for 2017. We are in the implementation phase of the new note S/2016/619 by the President of the Security Council, of 15 July. From the beginning of August, as co-facilitators of the process, the United Kingdom and Japan have been consulting informally with the newly elected and the incumbent members of the Council. We will undertake further consultations in accordance with the text and spirit of the presidential note.

I would again like to thank the Malaysian representative and his delegation for all of the good work they have done during the month of August. I wish the representative of New Zealand a successful presidency in the month of September. We would like to assure him that we will provide all of the support he will need.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): As we head into September and a new General Assembly high season, it is appropriate for us to take a moment to consider some of the Security Council priorities we have addressed during the busy month of August, which we will need to continue to address moving forward. In particular, I would like to focus on the Council's work on Syria and South Sudan and to briefly touch on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and our ongoing deliberations on the selection of the next Secretary-General.

As we have for so many months, in August the Council focussed on the political, humanitarian and security situations in Syria, as other colleagues have noted. I, too, would like to take a moment to recall the very moving Arria Forumula meeting that the United Kingdom, France, New Zealand and Ukraine hosted with us, where we heard directly from those who witnessed the siege in Aleppo. They were individuals who had worked so hard to try to relieve some of the terrible suffering there, including medical doctors and first-responder White Helmets. The scenes they described and images they shared showed clearly a humanitarian catastrophe of searing scale. Cutting off food and medicine to hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians undermines the cessation of hostilities and plays into the hands of violent extremist groups. The next day, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Stephen O'Brien and Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura met with the Council and called for an immediate renewal of the cessation of hostilities and a pause to enable humanitarian access.

Incredibly, largely because of the Syrian regime's obstruction, no inter-agency United Nations convoys were able to deliver assistance from 1 to 23 August, and from 23 to 29 August just four United Nations inter-agency convoys delivered assistance to besieged or hard-to-reach areas in Syria. We simply must see improvements in humanitarian access. As I said in the Chamber a little more than one week ago, while the United States condemns all parties to the conflict that use siege tactics, we must be clear that the Al-Assad regime and its international backers are responsible for the suffering of the overwhelming majority of Syrians living under siege.

That leads me to a point I would like to make regarding the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Just yesterday, we received a disturbing but important briefing from High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Kim Won-soo and Joint Investigative Mechanism Head Virginia Gamba. We are reviewing the findings of the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and United Nations. But, based on what we have heard, the case is strong and clear that a robust Council response is warranted. It is essential that we come together to ensure consequences for those who have used chemical weapons in Syria.

Another country where the status quo is unbearable is South Sudan. The Security Council took important

action this month to respond to calls from key regional partners to establish a regional protection force within the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Resolution 2304 (2016) sets out three priorities for the 4,000-strong regional protection force: first, facilitaing safe and free movement in Juba; secondly, protecting key facilities; and, thirdly, preventing attacks against civilians, the United Nations and humanitarian actors. The force will have the authority to use all the necessary means to carry out those responsibilities. Those efforts will support the broader mission of UNMISS to protect civilians, monitor human rights, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and support the implementation of the peace agreement. We look forward to the Council mission that Senegal and the United States will lead to South Sudan starting tomorrow.

Another challenge on the Council's docket that requires resolve involves the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Again, and more than once, the Council was required to meet urgently to address a new provocation by North Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's actions, and the advancements in its ballistic-missile capabilities in particular, cannot be ignored.

I would also like to mention our work on the selection of the next Secretary-General. The Council held its second and third straw polls in August, and we feel that the process is moving in the right direction. But we must stay focussed on our deliberations, despite the busy month ahead. Even as we plan for the arrival of many of our countries' leaders in just a few weeks, we look forward to continuing our efforts in September to identify the best qualified candidate to lead the Organization into the next decade.

Finally, I would like to thank Malaysia for its superb leadership of the Council this month, and to offer our support to New Zealand as it takes up the gavel in the busy month of September.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Malaysia.

I wish to thank my colleagues for the many kind words extended to me and my delegation. We are truly appreciative of the support extended and for the constructiveness demonstrated by all Security Council members throughout the month of August, during which Malaysia had the honour and privilege to preside over the Council. I also wish to thank all delegations for participating in the wrap-up session today.

The joint statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the three African members of the Council —Angola, Egypt and Senegal — highlighted the flexibility of this meeting's format, as envisioned in the note by the President S/2010/507. Malaysia continues to believe that formal wrap-ups such as these provide an excellent opportunity for the Council's self-reflection in an open and transparent manner. While acknowledging that interactivity, especially with non-Council members, is an issue, we continue to believe that alternating between formal and informal, or Toledo-style wrap-ups, as has been the practice for most of the year, at least provides a good mix and balances the need for accountability and interactivity.

As a final word on working methods, my delegation would strongly encourage Japan, in its capacity as Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Questions, and in the context of the upcoming comprehensive review of note 507, to thoroughly consider the need for the Council to better manage the expectations of the wider membership, especially with regard to transparency in the Council's work.

From the vantage point afforded by the President's seat, I am pleased to note that, despite the expectation that August would be somewhat less eventful, that was hardly the case. That is by no means to suggest that we had expected or anticipated the many situations that broke out or flared up. Rather, the programme of wor' that we adopted provided sufficient flexibility to accommodate a range of issues. For the record, the Council adopted a total of nine products throughout August. Two of them were key resolutions, namely, resolution 2304 (2016), on South Sudan, and resolution 2305 (2016), on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which we adopted yesterday. We also adopted an important presidential statement (S/PRST/2016/13) in support of the ongoing political and election processes in Somalia. Five press statements were adopted. Two of them expressed the Council's strong condemnation of terrorist attacks in Turkey and in Kabul. Other situations on which the Council pronounced itself included denouncing the killings of civilians in North Kivu province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on the Sudan and South Sudan, particularly our support for the African Union High-level Implementation Panel road map agreement. Finally, a press statement was adopted that expressed the Council's collective concern about developments in the Korean peninsula.

Beyond those outcomes, significant discussions were held on a range of other issues and situations. As mentioned by earlier speakers, the Council's early action to support the peace process in Colombia is noteworthy. In that regard, we look forward to working closely with other Council members to ensure that the gains made can be consolidated through the United Nations coordinated support and facilitation, with the assistance of the guarantor and accompanying countries, including fellow Council member Venezuela.

I also wish to express my delegation's deepest sympathy and condolences to the Chinese delegation on the suicide car-bomb attack against the Chinese Embassy in Bishkek yesterday. We strongly condemn the attack against premises that are inviolable under international law.

Malaysia strongly believes that there remains much scope for the Council to improve its record and practices with regard to conflict prevention. To that end, the initiative of improving the Council's situational awareness, spearheaded by New Zealand, is important and should benefit from thorough and positive consideration by all Council members.

Malaysia is also pleased to have convened the Council's annual open debate (see S/PV.7753) on children and armed conflict this month. We continue to believe that the mechanism on children and armed conflict remains one of the most effective instruments at Council's disposal to advocate for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict around the world. That important role and mandate must continue to command the Council's undivided support.

The high-level open debate (see S/PV.7758) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) was another initiative that Malaysia undertook this month. The debate was convened primarily to support the ongoing comprehensive review of the status of implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), led by Spain. At the same time, the debate also sought to highlight the importance of continued international focus on the threat posed by the possible proliferation of WMDs and related materials and technologies to non-State actors and violent extremist groups. We believe that the debate successfully highlighted the linkages between ongoing conflicts and the possible risk of the proliferation of WMD material and technologies.

Finally, Malaysia is also honoured and deeply privileged to have been twice entrusted with facilitating the appointment process for the next Secretary-General this month. We continue to believe that the appointment process could benefit from greater transparency. After all, we are in the process of selecting an individual who will lead the United Nations at a time when it is beset by significant challenges that require strength and tenacity of will to overcome. As such, our decision as a Council must not depart from the expectations of the full range of partners and stakeholders, namely, the international community at large.

I wish to conclude by expressing once again, on behalf of the Malaysian delegation, our deepest appreciation to all Council members for the support and constructive cooperation rendered to us throughout the month. We sincerely hope that the spirit of flexibility, compromise and goodwill that is a hallmark of the Council and its members will continue to prevail.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Before adjourning the meeting, as this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of August, I would like again to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of Malaysia to the members of the Council, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives and their respective staffs, as well as to the secretariat of the Council, for all the support they have given us. It has been a busy month indeed, and one in which we rallied to consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and of the representatives of the secretariat, includinig all the relevant Conference Officers and interpreters. As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of New Zealand good luck in the month of September.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7767

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7767th meeting

Tuesday, 6 September 2016, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Van Bohemen	(New Zealand)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Li Yongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Stehelin
	Japan	Mr. Akahori
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Senegal	Mr. Faye
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

Letter dated 5 August 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/693)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-27812 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: As this is the first public meeting of the Council for the month of September, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador Ramlan Bin Ibrahim, Permanent Representative of Malaysia, for his service as President of the Council for the month of August. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Ibrahim and his delegation for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

Letter dated 5 August 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/693)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/752, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Uruguay.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/693, which contains a letter dated 5 August 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2306 (2016).

The meeting rose at 3.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7768

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7768th meeting

Tuesday, 13 September 2016, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. McCully	(New Zealand)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-28515 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Colombia to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/774, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by all Council members. I would like to thank all Council members for sponsoring the draft resolution, which is now a presidential text.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/729, which contains the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the United Nations mission in Colombia.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2307 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): On behalf of the United Kingdom, I warmly welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 2307 (2016) today, and I congratulate the Government of Colombia on the historic peace agreement reached with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) last month.

"Historic" is a word that is sometimes overused in this Chamber, and yet today it could not be more fitting. Through this resolution, we have marked history — an agreement that brings to an end over half a century of fighting and that has taken almost four years to negotiate. It is a process that is already bringing the dividends of peace. Just this weekend, we saw more children released into a new life — one without guns and without fear. Both parties have shown great bravery and leadership in giving those children and every other Colombian genuine hope for the future.

It takes courage to lay aside weapons and accept the protection of a former enemy. It took a bold step — perhaps an unprecedented step — for a Government to put its country on the Council's agenda. In turn, the Council has shown great sensitivity and flexibility in responding quickly to Colombia's request. As the penholder on this issue, I am proud of the role that the United Kingdom has played, both here and in Colombia, in support of the peace agreement, and I pay tribute in particular to Cuba and Norway, as well as Chile and Venezuela, for their sustained support throughout the process.

But resolution 2307 (2016) is not just about tributes; it is also about providing our own support to make sure that this historic agreement turns into a historic peace. Through the resolution, we have finalized the mandate of the United Nations mission. We have authorized 450 United Nations observers to be there on the ground, verifying the return of peace after over 50 years of conflict. We have authorized the United Nations mission to contribute, together with the Government of Colombia, towards the camps for the FARC. And we have committed to doing all that in a way that maximizes the number of women in the mission.

Resolution 2307 (2016) is just one more milestone in Colombia's long journey towards peace. Outside this Chamber, generations of ordinary Colombians have lived their lives knowing nothing but war, and they now stand on the brink of peace. Next month, the people of Colombia will have a momentous opportunity to choose between a lasting peace or a return to years of conflict and suffering. The choice is in their hands.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the delegation of the United Kingdom for its work in leading the negotiations on the drafting of

resolution 2307 (2016), which we adopted today in the belief that it will help to consolidate and strengthen peace at this hopeful stage for Colombia. Uruguay commends the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo for the historic agreement reached on 24 August on ending the conflict and building stable and lasting peace in Colombia, which made it possible for us to adopt today's resolution. My country acknowledges and highlights the commitment and courage of the parties during the four years of negotiations. The implementation of the agreement will put an end to the last and oldest conflict on the hemisphere, while consolidating Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace. My country also acknowledges the ongoing efforts of Cuba and Norway as guarantor countries, as well as the work of Chile and Venezuela as supporting countries during the peace negotiations. We are also grateful for the complete and detailed report (S/2016/729) of the Secretary-General, which informed the drafting of today's resolution and which details the complex work still ahead, which we trust will be concluded successfully.

At this new stage in the process, Uruguay reaffirms its support for peace in Colombia and reiterates its readiness and willingness to continue to work with the parties in any way they deem we can be useful. Uruguay is very pleased to point out that this was a process initiated and led by Colombians, with Colombians as the main focus of its future success. We believe that hallmark of the process is an example for the international community. We will continue attentively to follow each step forward in this new phase of the process in the same spirit of supporting the Government and the people of Colombia at such a crucial stage of their national history and that of the entire American continent.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): After nearly four years of negotiations and over half a century of conflict, the Colombian Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) have reached a final peace accord that covers myriad complex issues. Today the United States welcomes the support of the Security Council to help Colombia implement its final peace accord with the FARC, and congratulates the parties for their sustained commitment to ending the longest-running conflict in the Americas, which tragically resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and tens of thousands of kidnappings and displaced millions of Colombians. We also thank Cuba and Norway for the special roles they played as co-guarantors, as well as Venezuela and Chile, which supported the process.

As President Obama said,

> "Even as we mark the end of an era of war, we recognize that the work of achieving a just and lasting peace is only beginning. Yet just as the United States has been Colombia's partner in a time of war, we will be Colombia's partner in waging peace."

Through resolution 2307 (2016), the Security Council makes clear that the United Nations also stands with the Colombian people as they work towards implementing the final peace accord. The agreement's successful implementation is integral to the hard work of securing a truly just and lasting peace, which all those gathered here today know is something that the Colombian people unquestionably deserve.

Today's resolution will ensure the readiness of the United Nations monitoring and verification mission in Colombia by updating the mandate with details that were unavailable last January when resolution 2261 (2016) was adopted. The United States commends those countries that will be playing a role in the United Nations monitoring and verification mechanism to monitor and verify the bilateral ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities and the disarmament process.

The stakes for the success of the mission are high. The recent killing of five human rights activists in Colombia, including the assassination of Nestor Iván Martínez over the weekend, makes clear that the peace is still fragile. The United Nations monitoring and verification responsibilities will be critical to building confidence between the parties and preventing a return to armed conflict. With today's adoption, we are confident it will be up to the task.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela co-sponsored and voted in favor of resolution 2307 (2016), on the establishment and operation of the United Nations political mission in the Republic of Colombia, which complements resolution 2261 (2016). We did so out of our conviction that the former constitutes a fundamental element in the verification and monitoring of the international community over the historic peace process taking place in fraternal Colombia. I kindly as

that Ambassador María Emma Mejía Vélez convey our congratulations to her Government.

Today's unanimous adoption of the resolution took place in an atmosphere of joy and hope following the definitive, full and Final Agreement reached between the Government of Colombia and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo to end once and for all the bloody conflict that brought mourning to the Colombian people for over 50 years. The commitment of the parties to ending the war and building a stable and lasting peace has led to widespread support and a feeling of joy in our region and among the international community. We commend both parties on that historic agreement.

For our country, it is extremely important that Colombia successfully build a society of peace, for, as the brothers we are, we have felt for and supported the Colombian people throughout the terrible years of violence. Our countries were created and forged together under the leadership of the sword of the Liberator Simón Bolívar. We were one country, and the liberation armies crossed borders only to bring freedom to the rest of South America.

On our own territory, we have given shelter to more than 4 million Colombians who, product of the war and its economic consequences, were forced to move. Similarly, along the entire length of our long border of over 2,000 kilometres, we have suffered the rigours of violence and the existence of illegal structures to finance and support the war in Colombia. Today our border area is plagued by the phenomenon of paramilitarism, which was created as an anti-insurgent strategy and must be completely dismantled.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela feels vindicated, along with Cuba, Chile and Norway, for having participated as supporters and guarantors of the complex and lengthy negotiation process that culminated in the signed peace accords. We also greatly appreciate the effort, participation and political support of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which expressed its unanimous support for the terms of the agreements and their willingness to participate and support the work of the United Nations political mission.

I would also like to mention and recognize President Hugo Chávez Frías for his commitment and tireless work for peace in Colombia. As a close associate of his, I can attest to his efforts and constant concern for peace in Colombia, as well as to the political work led directly by him to approach and convince the parties as to the need for peace.

The work ahead for the political mission in supporting the parties in implementing the agreements and in monitoring and verifying compliance is a complex, and probably the most difficult task of all. Hence the need for the United Nations to dedicate itself as a whole — not only on aspects pertaining to financing the mission along with the Colombian Government, but above all in the extensive work relating to eradicating the root causes of conflict and creating spaces for former combatants and their bases of political support to participate in political and economic life.

We must work intensely and come to grips with the causes and characteristics of the conflict if we are to counter them and go from a logic and dynamic of intolerance and violence to one of inclusion, peace and social justice. We must recall that the war was triggered in part by the assassination of the popular leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and the Bogotazo riots, after which broad sectors of the Colombian people were unable to participate in the political process and advocate for their economic and social aspirations, particularly those concerning land access and peasant claims.

We are concerned about the persistence of violent elements, which no doubt will be a problem the political mission will face on the ground. Some of these elements are national while others are local, such as paramilitarism and drug trafficking, which are an ongoing obstacle to peace. We also must be able to counter the actions of warlords, who have a great deal of economic and political clout in the country.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has supported, supports and will continue to support all efforts towards peace in Colombia. President Nicolás Maduro has expressed that sentiment, and we are doing so at the request of the Colombian Government. We hope and trust that the success of the United Nations political mission and the parties' adherence to the peace agreements will blaze a path for other insurgent groups to sign on to the peace process and the entire military and war structure can begin to adapt to the new reality.

In order to build momentum for peace, it is essential to reconsider Plan Colombia: Plan for Peace, Prosperity and the Strengthening of the State , which would result in a disproportionate foreign military presence on Colombian soil. Our country, deeply respectful of

the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Colombia, as well as the decisions of its Government and people, reiterates its offer to send at least 100 Venezuelan observers, with excellent training and gender balance, to be integrated into the United Nations political mission. We are deeply committed to the success of the mission and we have in-depth knowledge of the terrain and characteristics of the conflict.

Finally, we hope that the entire people of Colombia will support President Santos in this courageous historic bid for peace. It is our wish that by 2 October, peace and social justice will triumph over war.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister of Foreign Affairs for New Zealand.

At the outset, I welcome the Colombian Permanent Representative to the Council today. The historic peace agreement concluded between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) rebels on 24 August represents a significant milestone that offers the promise of a future of security and prosperity for all Colombians in the years to come. New Zealand congratulates President Santos on the courage and determination that he and his country have demonstrated in order to conclude this historic agreement.

We also commend FARC for its commitment to peace through the long period of negotiations. We congratulate and thank Cuba and Norway, as well as Chile and Venezuela, for their vital roles in steering the peace process to its successful conclusion. The United Nations will play a crucial role in supporting the effective implementation of Colombia's peace agreement.

By adopting resolution 2307 (2016) today, endorsing the Secretary-General's recommendations in his most recent report (S/2016/729) for a special political mission to assist with monitoring and verifying the agreed ceasefire and laying down of arms, the Security Council is ensuring it plays its part in helping to secure a better future for Colombia. It is only appropriate that the Council should play its part in these efforts. We hope that the activities of the special political mission can help give confidence to all sides that key elements of the agreement are being faithfully and effectively implemented by both sides.

The Security Council's response to Colombia's requests for assistance also represents an unusual and positive model for how the Council can and should interact with conflict-affected States. It is rare for a country to voluntarily approach the Security Council seeking its help. Colombia's actions in doing so, and the Council's swift responsiveness to its requests, with due respect to the specific needs of the situation, have provided an example of how constructive the relationship can be between the Council and the countries it seeks to assist. New Zealand was pleased to sponsor the resolution today, and welcomes its unanimous adoption. We recognize that challenges remain, and that there is a long road ahead to secure the peace that has been made, but with the continued commitment of all parties, we are confident these can be overcome.

The Colombian people will have an opportunity to express their views on the peace agreement through the referendum on 2 October. We hope they will choose the path of peace. New Zealand is also committed to supporting Colombia's efforts to find lasting stability and reconciliation, and to ensuring that Colombia experiences an early peace dividend. That is why we have pledged to assist Colombia in achieving its goal to become a landmine-free country by 2021. Colombia will not face the road ahead alone. New Zealand, the Council, and the international community stand ready to help.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, I welcome you in presiding over today's meeting. China welcomes the Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2307 (2016), authorizing the United Nations mission in Colombia.

The Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia reached a final peace agreement in August, which will soon be formally signed and which represents major progress in Colombia's peace process. China wishes to extend its congratulations in that connection and to express its appreciation for the efforts of the Colombian Government and other countries, including Venezuela, Cuba, Chile and Norway, in that connection.

The signing of the final peace agreement will provide lasting peace and stability to the Colombian people and promote the peace and stability of the entire

region. It will also have a positive ripple effect on the search for solutions to other regional hotspot issues. The Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2307 (2016) is conducive to stepping up the deployment of the United Nations political mission in Colombia, facilitating the implementation of the monitoring and verification mechanism, and further promoting the peace process in Colombia.

China hopes that the United Nations will, on the basis of respect for Colombia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, work to strengthen communication and coordination with the Colombian Government, facilitate the early deployment of the mission, help the parties in Colombia in fully implementing the ceasefire agreement and the final peace agreement, and provide constructive assistance to Colombia to ensure a smooth implementation of the peace process.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank and welcome you, Sir. Your presence here today demonstrates the importance of this meeting.

France warmly welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2307 (2016), which is a major step and pillar in the establishment of this historic peace in Colombia. It establishes the size, operational aspects and mandate of the United Nations mission created by the Council in order to monitor and verify respect for the ceasefire between the Colombian Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), as well as the laying down of arms agreed to last year in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement concluded on 23 June in Havana. The Council's new resolution, for which we are grateful to the United Kingdom, will enable the mission to begin working to deploy on the ground as soon as possible with the goal of being fully operational as soon as the Agreement enters into force. It concludes an exemplary planning and preparation process in which the United Nations has taken all necessary steps to respond effectively to the joint call by the parties concerned for support in implementing the peace provisions. Once again, France heartily welcomes this outcome.

Adopted only days after the conclusion of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Long Lasting Peace between the Colombian Government and FARC, which has paved the way for ending a conflict that has lasted more than 50 years, today's resolution shows that our Organization as a whole, and the Security Council in particular, has lived up to expectations. It demonstrates once again the degree to which the United Nations is a central, legitimate and trusted actor in the maintenance of international peace and security all over the world.

France would like to once again congratulate President Santos Calderón, who had the courage and foresight to begin negotiations with FARC in 2012, and to acknowledge the role played in the Agreement by the guarantor States, Cuba and Norway, as well as the supporting States, Chile and Venezuela. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that as a nation, France stands in support of the Colombian people on their historic journey towards peace. Besides working on the issue in the Council, we will continue to support the peace process bilaterally, specifically by contributing to funding rural development and demining, and as part of the European Union, which also has an important part to play in implementing the Agreement.

The resolution we have just adopted is one of the final, essential bricks in the wall that is peace in Colombia. It is up to the Colombian people to complete it on the basis of the plebiscite to be held on 2 October. France will continue to work diligently to ensure that the peace process in Colombia succeeds, not only, of course, for Colombia and its people first and foremost, but also for the United Nations.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): In January, at a ministerial-level Security Council meeting (S/PV.7609) held under the Uruguayan presidency, we adopted resolution 2261 (2016), which created a monitoring mission in Colombia designed to begin its work during the 12 months following the signing of a final peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Six months after that, in Havana on 24 August, the Colombian parties signed the historic Final Agreement, bringing 50 years of internal conflict to a definitive end. Today, under the presidency of New Zealand, and at another ministerial-level meeting — and I would like to thank New Zealand's Minister for Foreign Affairs for his presence here — the Council has just adopted resolution 2307 (2016), approving, among other things, the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding the size, operational aspects and mandate of the mission.

Senegal, as a firm supporter of the peaceful settlement of disputes, welcomes the determined commitment of the Colombian parties and the trust they

have placed in the Security Council, thereby helping to restore the Council to the heart of its original mission. That is why the Senegalese delegation sponsored and voted in favour of resolution 2307 (2016), in a sign of its faith in the peace process in Colombia. I take this opportunity to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for its leadership in conducting the formal negotiations, as well as the guarantor States, Cuba and Norway, and Chile and Venezuela, the supporting States.

As the international component and coordinator of the tripartite monitoring and verification mechanism, the United Nations mission in Colombia will have the important job of monitoring the separation of the forces and the laying down of arms, including through its regional offices, set up for managing the transitional local points for normalization. The recent tripartite visit of the United Nations, the Colombian Government and FARC to the areas where the operations will take place augur well. To the representative of Colombia here in the Council today, I would like to repeat what I said at our meeting in January, in a quotation from a popular Colombian television series, which is that "a people that does not know its history is condemned to see that history repeat itself indefinitely". Today I can say that Colombia has learned the tragic lesson of the past 50 years and has taken a historic step, one full of hope.

Mr. Gimolieca (Angola): Angola voted in favour of resolution 2307 (2016), which approves the Secretary-General's recommendations on the size, operational aspects and mandate of a United Nations mission in Colombia. We warmly welcome the signing, on 24 August, of the Final Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP), putting an end to more than 50 years of conflict.

We also welcome the recent report (S/2016/729) of the Secretary-General and its recommendation for deploying 450 unarmed observers and a civilian component. We commend the efforts of the mediators in the peace negotiations in Havana — Cuba, Norway, Venezuela and Chile — for their manifold contributions to peace and security in the region. We urge the two sides to strive to implement the peace agreement and wish the monitoring and verification mechanism every success in its work with the Government and FARC-EP in implementing the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities.

Lastly, we call on the international community to support the implementation of the peace agreement by providing the financial and logistical assistance that the Government of Colombia needs to ensure the success of the peace process.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is an honour for me to participate in today's historic meeting, which crowns the work that has been done to achieve peace in Colombia with the Council's adoption of resolution 2307 (2016), which moves the peace process into a new stage, on the basis of a solid foundation and the support of the United Nations. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Colombian Government on reaching a peace agreement with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), enabling Colombia to begin a new chapter in its history and put an end to a conflict that has lasted more than 50 years and created thousands of victims.

Today's resolution was adopted unanimously, proof of the Council's desire to ensure that the Government of Colombia has the support it needs in order to restore peace in the country. In that regard, I would like to point out that Egypt sponsored and voted in favour of the resolution, because we have always supported the Colombian Government in its efforts to achieve peace.

I therefore thank all those who contributed to and played an effective role in achieving this historic Agreement. I hope that the people of Columbia will be satisfied with it, so that it can be truly implemented and the United Nations political mission can commence its work.

I would also like to thank the United Kingdom delegation for its contribution in drafting the resolution and achieving the necessary consensus.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): Malaysia is pleased to have co-sponsored and voted in favour of resolution 2307 (2106), which was adopted unanimously today, and endorses the recommendations of the Secretary-General concerning the size, operational aspects and mandate of the United Nations mission in Columbia, as contained his report (S/2016/729).

We take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Columbia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP) on reaching a final peace accord, which

will close a chapter on half a century of armed conflict. The success of the peace process is the culmination of the political will, courage and leadership of both sides in finding solutions aimed at a peaceful and prosperous Colombia, bolstered by the unwavering support of the international community. Those shared aims must continue to guide the work of all parties in the implementation of the peace accords, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

We wish to commend in particular the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP for their commitment to the protections and rights of children during the peace process, exemplified by the Agreement signed on 15 May between the two sides to separate and reintegrate children associated with FARC-EP. We are heartened by the release of the first group of children associated with FARC-EP on 10 September to the relevant child-protection actors and look forward to further progress in implementing the Agreement. In that regard, we stress the importance of coordination between all relevant United Nations presences and mechanisms in Colombia in ensuring that children affected by the armed conflict receive the attention, protection and assistance that they need.

We reiterate our firm support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Jean Arnault, and the United Nations mission in Colombia, as they carry out their mandate within the monitoring and verification mechanism. The good will and cooperation of member States of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in contributing observers to the mission is fully recognized and deeply appreciated. We also pay tribute to the guarantors, Cuba and Norway, as well as the accompanying countries of the peace process, Chile and Venezuela, for the positive role, which they have played in the peace process.

In closing, we are hopeful that lasting peace and stability are within reach. We must working towards ensuring that the hopes and dreams of a Colombia free from conflict become a reality. We wish the people of Colombia well in this journey towards shared prosperity for all Colombians.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): Japan is very pleased to have co-sponsored resolution 2307 (2016), unanimously adopted today. It is an enormous step forward for Colombia's reconciliation and development after half a century of conflict and four years of peace talks. Japan would like once again to welcome the final peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP) on 24 August. We congratulate the parties on this historic achievement for the good of the people of Colombia. Japan particularly commends Cuba, Norway, Chile and Venezuela for their contribution to the process.

We now turn to the essential work of implementation. As was emphasized in resolution 2261 (2016), the people of Colombia must be true owners of the Agreement. All parties should work together to the process forward, but we, the international community, also have a vital role to play through the United Nations mission in Colombia. Having co-sponsored resolution 2261 (2016) and 2307 (2016), Japan fully supports the mission. We look forward to the mission's success over the course of the coming year.

Japan also underlines its continued commitment to the political process and to the equitable and sustainable socioeconomic development of Colombia, including through the rehabilitation of victims and post-conflict assistance, such as demining. After more than five decades of conflict, Colombia is approaching a critical phase in achieving national unity and overcoming its remaining challenges, including the laying down of arms and reintegration.

In Japan, we say that on a trip, just as it is reassuring to have a companion, it is similarly important to support each other on the journey through life. Japan pledged to be such a companion to the people of Colombia as they advance on their journey towards true reconciliation.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Sir, for all your efforts and for presiding over this meeting, which has a very special meaning for Spain.

In January, Colombia asked the Security Council to support the peace process, which had not yet been concluded, while the ceasefire had not yet been achieved. Contrary to the natural tendency of the Council, a special mission was authorized. That was certainly an unusual occurrence, explained by the fact that the Council was fully convinced on that occasion that the people of Colombia were going to successfully achieve peace. It was a wager for Colombia and Colombians.

The universally known author Miguel de Cervantes wrote, "The goal that we seek tires us all the more when

we are closer to the hope of obtaining it". Colombians have not given into that fatigue, and on 26 August made history with the signing of the final peace Agreement. Through its effort, determination and courage, Colombia seems committed to rejecting once and for all the argument of Álvaro Mutis, who wrote that the human species is hopeless.

Today we have adopted a second resolution — resolution 2307 (2016) — with 15 votes in favour and 15 sponsors on the mission in Colombia, which has just clarified several aspects of its mandate but maintains the focus on defined tasks within specified time frames as requested by the parties. Spain is very proud to participate in the United Nations mission in Colombia by providing 22 observers, 25 per cent of whom are women, which particularly pleased us, especially since that is in line with the request made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

To conclude, within the specific context of the laying down of arms and the ceasefire, towards which the mission is working, there are other aspects — such as demining, reintegration, reparations and restitution for victims — that are particularly important in order to establish a lasting peace. With regard to support in those areas, which the international community is providing, Colombia can always count on Spain.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): The Ukrainian delegation decided to co-sponsor resolution 2307 (2016), adopted today, for the following reasons.

Ukraine welcomes the Final Agreement for the Termination of Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace reached between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, which has been achieved after almost four years of formal negotiations. President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón said that the peace agreement represented the beginning of the end of the suffering, pain and tragedy of war and that it brought an end to more than 50 years of armed conflict in Colombia.

In the spirit of strong support for a stable and long-lasting peace in the Republic of Colombia, Ukraine welcomes today's resolution, which endorsed the report (S/2016/729) of the Secretary-General and his recommendations on the mandate of the United Nations mission in Colombia. We also express our appreciation to the British delegation for its leadership and efficient work in preparing the draft and conducting negotiations.

The Security Council should continue to play a proactive role in supporting the parties as they advance in implementing the provisions of the Final Agreement, as well as ensuring the effective functioning of the tripartite monitoring and verification mechanism.

We believe that the Colombian experience of engaging the United Nations as the international component of the tripartite mechanism will be a success story that will bring stability to the region and become an example for other parts of the world affected by lasting conflict.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation supported resolution 2307 (2016) and hopes that it will lead to a final settlement in Colombia.

The agreement reached in Havana between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP) is key to the pacific settlement of more than half a century of inter-Colombian conflict. The agreement opens a new chapter for the country in terms of national reconciliation and development.

We congratulate the parties to the dialogue and the Colombian people on this victory. We note the political resolve involved in finding a compromise solution that was displayed by the participants in the negotiation process and the significant mediation efforts deployed by the guarantors, Cuba and Norway, assisted by Venezuela and Chile. A considerable contribution has been made to the promotion of peace in Latin America, to the bolstering of regional stability and to reaffirming the effectiveness of legal political means in solving long-standing, even very difficult, problems.

We hope for a swift conclusion to the preparation period for the practical implementation of the provisions of the Final Agreement. We are prepared to continue to assist Colombia, both bilaterally and multilaterally, by providing international assistance to the settlement process and to ensuring that the necessary post-conflict changes take place.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to thank you, Minister McCully, for your presence here today and for the unanimous decision just taken by the Security Council in adopting resolution 2307 (2016). This is yet another reflection of the commitment

of Council members and of the Members of the United Nations to peace in Colombia. On behalf of my Government, I should like to thank you for your invaluable help as well as Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, and his team of diplomats for having drafted the resolution and for the difficult task of coordinating it.

On 24 August, the lead negotiators of the Government and of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP) agreed in Havana something that many Colombians may have believed unattainable: final texts for ending the conflict and building a long-lasting and stable peace in my country. They will be endorsed through the signing of the Final Agreement on 26 September, in Cartagena de Indias — just three days — and thus put an end once and for all to more than five decades of armed conflict in our country. We are deeply grateful to and appreciative of the Governments of Cuba, Norway, Chile and Venezuela, as guarantors and supporters of the negotiating process, for their dedication and their commitment to this difficult undertaking. We are grateful also to the States members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States for contributing unarmed observers to the United Nations mission in Colombia, and to all the other countries that will be supporting us through their participation, as, Spain, for example, just announced it would do.

This negotiating process has been arduous, complex and fraught. Begun four years ago, it leaves important lessons for peace for the world and great challenges with respect to its implementation, as some here have pointed out. It has been an inclusive process that has placed at the centre of peace the protection of human rights, specifically the rights of victims, women, peoples of African descent and indigenous people, organizations of farmers and of displaced persons, and ensured that all minors are removed from the ranks of FARC-EP and returned to civilian life.

The agreement has begun to bear fruit. Since the entry into force of the ceasefire, there has not been a single victim or clash because of the conflict. Likewise, on 10 September, representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross received the first 13 minors handed over as part of the commitment to return all of the children and adolescents who remain among the ranks of the organization. They and future Colombian generations, as President Santos has said, will now have the opportunity to learn about the suffering of the war only from history books.

With the signing of the Final Agreement on 26 September and the approval of the referendum to be held by the Government on 2 October, Colombians will have the opportunity to open the door to a better future, with a stable and lasting peace that we will have built with the support of the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole.

Foreign Minister María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, speaking here at the United Nations on 25 January, said that the international community, with the culmination of the peace process, will see a Colombia that is taking off, one that has enormous potential, human capacity and national resources. That will enable it not only to forge a more prosperous and just society but also to better contribute to the development of our Americas and the world. That was the dream of the thousands of Colombians whose lives were sacrificed to the violence and who cannot be here today to witness this historic event.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.